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# PCZONE

ISSUE 215 JANUARY 2010



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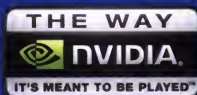
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PCZONE

# Contents

In this issue of the UK's best PC mag...

## EMBARGO DOOM

**T**HE LENGTHS WE go to so we can continue to bring you the most exclusive content we possibly can. Not only did Steve go to San Francisco (on deadline no less!) to get an exclusive hands-on with *BioShock 2*, but we put our necks on the line to secure the first PC review of *Modern Warfare 2*!

As I type, tonight's the official launch event and we're all very excited about heading to the after-party down the road, drinking as much free booze as we can, while they make us wait until midnight to get a copy of the game (you can never have too many). What is it with Infinity Ward and Activision with all these embargoes? I for one feel immense frustration on a monthly basis waiting for the PC version of a multiformat game to arrive, while our console brothers review to their hearts' content and this is no exception.

Ahead of launch, while the internet lit up with tales of retailers sending out copies early and who could offer the game for the cheapest price, we starred into space for approximately 72 hours while we waited for the thing to be activated, so we could review it in time for our looming deadline.

So here's to having sore heads tomorrow after a night of drowning our sorrows, and sore ears from *Modern Warfare*-ing into the night!

Oh, and a big welcome back to David who hobbled back into the office this month!

Ali Wood

Ali Wood  
Editor  
ali.wood@futurenet.com

# 40

COVER STORY

## BIOSHOCK 2

We head back into the depths to take an in-depth look at how 2K Marin made the Big Sister even more terrifying.



## 30 HISTORY OF A BLIZZARD

On *World of Warcraft*'s fifth birthday, we examine the history of its creator.



## 26 ALIENS VS PREDATOR



## 34 CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE



## 64 BORDERLANDS

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See page 48







## UPFRONT

- 14 LEAD NEWS
- 16 SPECIAL REPORT
- 18 CHARTS
- 20 INCOMING
- 22 LOG'S COLUMN
- 24 HOT SHOTS: METRO 2033
- 26 ALIENS VS PREDATOR
- 28 PC ZONE READERS' AWARDS
- 30 NEEDLE IN A BLIZZARD
- 34 CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE
- 38 GIFT GIVEAWAY!
- 40 BIOSHOCK 2

## REVIEWS

- 52 MODERN WARFARE 2
- 58 LEFT 4 DEAD 2
- 64 BORDERLANDS
- 68 COLIN MCRAE: DIRT 2
- 72 RACE ON
- 74 PAINKILLER: RESURRECTION
- 75 NBA 2K10
- 76 ORDER OF WAR
- 77 THE SIMS 3: WORLD ADVENTURES
- 78 MAJESTY 2
- 79 FIFA MANAGER 10
- 80 CRICKET REVOLUTION
- 81 TORCHLIGHT MACHINARIUM
- 82 TALES OF MONKEY ISLAND: LAIR OF THE LEVIATHAN
- 84 STATE OF PLAY: ULTIMA ONLINE
- 86 BUDGET
- 88 BUYER'S GUIDE

## HARDWARE

- 91 NEWS
- 92 DEAR WANDY
- 94 REVIEWS
- 96 BUYER'S GUIDE

## FREEPLAY

- 99 NEWS
- 102 DEMOS
- 104 FREWARE
- 106 EXTEND
- 108 GTR2 MODDING SPECIAL
- 114 HOW TO MAKE A GAME
- 116 ONLINE ZONE

## LOOKING BACK

- 118 RETRO ZONE
- 120 BACK IN THE DAY: HUNTER
- 122 ON THE PCZ HARD DRIVE
- 124 DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY
- BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM - PART 1
- 128 NEVERQUEST: AION
- 130 BACK PAGE



## WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



### 40 BIOSHOCK 2

**Too busy? PC ZONE** in 68 words... This month we welcomed back David to our ranks, and immediately threw the new *Painkiller* at him (with absolutely no sense of irony or sarcasm). Meanwhile Steve took a dive to check out *BioShock 2* and nearly wet himself playing *Aliens vs Predator*, while Will Porter got slash-happy in New Orleans with *Left 4 Dead 2*. Meanwhile Ali started her Christmas shopping early putting together a seasonal list of goodies.

**116**  
**ONLINE ZONE**  
**FIGHT CLUB!**  
**ZONE CHAT!**  
**RANTING!**  
**BLOGS!**



### 104 FREWARE

Explore the galaxy in record time, shoot things Japanese style, throw sweets in a pot, and run your own F1 team.

**58**

### LEFT 4 DEAD 2

Grab your guitars and grits, as the action moves to the Deep South. But have Valve delivered enough?





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Full offer details on page 48.

# Meet The Team

Here are the ones to thank for **PC ZONE**



## DAVID BROWN

**Recovering cripple**

**AGE** 29

**LIKES** Being in his 20s

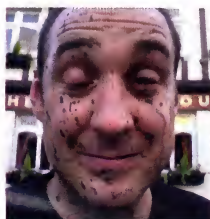
**DISLIKES** Nearing his 30s

**FANCIES** A facelift

**FAVOURITE GAME** *The Witcher: Enhanced Edition*

**NOW PLAYING** *Left 4 Dead 2*

A cry of "David's in the building!" went out as our sickly staff writer hobbled into the office. Leaning heavily on his cane, he soon started diagnosing each person in the office with a different exotic and/or obscure ailment. When quizzed about what had been wrong, his reply was simply: "I suffered a rupture of annulus fibrosis causing a pressurised release of nucleus pulposus, leading to high degrees of hyponuralgia," then popped an opiate.



## KEITH PULLIN

**Replacement David**

With doctors keeping David under house arrest, we were forced to get a stand-in. Veteran Zoner Keith heard our distress cry and came a'running to help. Thank you Keith.

**NOW PLAYING:** *Left 4 Dead 2*



## JON 'LOG' BLYTH

**Award-winning freelancer**

After his success at the Games Media Awards, Log began to feel the twin pressures of success and a growing ego. But it turned out to be a really bad hangover.

**NOW PLAYING:** *Left 4 Dead 2*

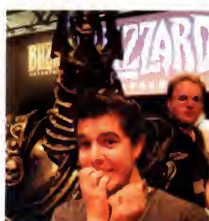


## ALI WOOD

**Editor**

In a display of Halloween cheer, Ali answered trick-or-treaters in a scary outfit. After the fifth child wet itself in terror, she decided her Boomer outfit was a bit much.

**NOW PLAYING:** *Left 4 Dead 2*



## STEVE HOGARTY

**Deputy Editor**

To show his joy at David's return to work, Steve revealed a *Doom* mod he'd made specially for his mate. David was left wondering why every Imp wore his face.

**NOW PLAYING:** *Left 4 Dead 2*



## WILL PORTER

**Freelancer and contortionist**

Mr Porter's latest portrait caused some consternation amongst the *PCZ* team. Exactly how did he get his legs to bend like that? Maybe Will needs more calcium in his diet.

**NOW PLAYING:** *Left 4 Dead 2*



## PAVEL BARTER

**Special reporter**

A new infant has brought joy, sleepless nights, and smelly nappies to the Barter household. Congrats, baby daddy. And don't worry: it'll get easier. (Yeah, right).

**NOW PLAYING:** *Left 4 Dead 2*

**WHAT'S HELPED THIS MONTH...** David being released from medically imposed house arrest.  
**WHAT HASN'T HELPED THIS MONTH...** Bloody Royal Mail going on bloody walk-outs!

## WHAT WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

**INFINITY WARD PT 1** 1.5hr No dedicated servers in *Modern Warfare 2*? A joke, right?

**INFINITY WARD PT 2** 1.75hr You play a terrorist in *Modern Warfare 2*? A joke, right?

**GUITAR VS KATANA** 15mins What is the best for dispatching Infected in melee?

**CHINA & NORTH KOREA** 4min Can we play *Counter-Strike* with people in Communist states?

**RUSSIAN COUNTER-STRIKE FANS** 8min They really prefer playing an FPS to playing with strippers. So sad.

**FIGHT CLUB LIVE!** Many hours 9 December. Gamerbase, London. Strippers not guaranteed.

**BIOWARE PR SPAM** 45min OK, *Dragon Age* is out. Will you shut up about it now?

**MASS EFFECT 2** 7min *Mass DLC 2* more like.

**DID HE REALLY?** 2min The original Batman had a penchant for killing. Honestly.

**TWITTER SPAM** 1sec No we don't want to play *Mafia Wars*. So stop asking us!

## WIN!



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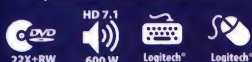
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# Letters

Ali Wood urges you to post Christmas presents now so they reach her in time



## KING OF LETTERS

### FREE TO WASTE MY TIME

*Battlefield Heroes*, free to play? Excellent, or so I thought. I downloaded it, tried to patch it, read lots of other people having problems on the forum, tried those fixes, and still nothing. I even tried another computer, but still nothing. A month later I reinstalled it from scratch, got the same problem and gave up.

When *Steam* announced a free weekend of *Champions Online*, I thought "great". Twenty minutes later and I found it needed to be patched through the game's server. Three hours later I'm still patching, even though I have fast broadband!

So, I gave up and decided to give *Runes of Magic* a go, from the *PC ZONE* disc. Yet again, after installing the game, I found it needed patching! It took two attempts over two days, but finally, it updated. Then, when I started the game, the mouse pointer turned into a sword and it crashed!



After all this, I'm going back to downloading off *Steam*: it never crashes, is quick and easy to use, and I've had some right bargains – *Audiosurf*, *Red Orchestra*, *Mare Nostrum* – and they patch fast and never crash!

The *Team Fortress 2* and *Warhammer Online* patches were quick, and full of content; the *TF2* Halloween mod was a hoot. It made

me wonder why I bother with free-to-play games?

**David Leverno**

You know that annoying advert "What does 'free' mean to you?" I imagine your response would be "absolutely nothing". How about an ASUS 9600GT TOP as our King of Letters? Will that be a nice 'free' thing for you? I hope so.

### EMPIRE: WHAT WAR?

I'm praying that *Napoleon: Total War* will be worth buying. I was disappointed with *Empire: Total War*; the battlefield engine is a very poor relation to that from earlier games in the series, even

though it's supposedly technically better. How did Creative Assembly manage to actually regress from the delights of *Medieval II* and *Kingdoms*?

I play an occasional naval battle but *Empire* otherwise leaves me cold: an achievement since I have wasted trillions of hours playing all of the other *Total War* games from *Shogun* onwards. And while it is great to see CA supporting their product with free extra content, and fixing bugs, I note that there have been no less than 10 rounds of patching so far. No other *Total War* game has needed so much bug-fixing after release.

Could *Napoleon: Total War* mark the final huzzah, of a once brilliant series?

**Gavin Hay**

Sorry to hear you're disappointed Gavin. As you know we loved *Empire* and have high hopes for *Napoleon* too. In fact in next month's issue we'll have

a first hands-on with it and we'll give you our first impressions then.

### CODIES LET DOWN

After months of eager anticipation I bought *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising* after having read your review. I couldn't wait, 20% more than *ArmA II*? This was going to be something special.

Things started off really well, the game loaded without any need to even type in a code, let alone connect to the internet. But what's this? A serious, realistic shooter with load-out screens that look like they've been ported directly from *GRID* and that scream "console". I could feel my whole psyche change. I was no longer a soldier about to enter into battle (which I've always assumed is the aim of a simulation), I was back to being the gamer sitting at my desk.

Then I discovered the whole mechanics of the game sought to make it



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Damn laxatives.



"I was no longer a soldier  
about to enter into battle"

feel like a console game: no ability to learn, and a really cumbersome way of selecting actions. So *ArmA II* isn't great but it does encompass a hell of a lot more options. The on-screen health indicators for the squad members seemed to be a lot more intrusive than they need be, why couldn't they appear right at the edge of the screen and not some inch or so in to it? For some reason the representation of my weapon seemed to annoy me because it was just too far into the field of vision and why-oh-why can we not have the quicksave ability? I must have played the game for about three and a half hours over that first weekend but the stats tell me I'm 20 minutes into it.

In light of the above, which has only scratched the surface, may I suggest that Codemasters look to *Crysis* to see how it should be done? It is only on reflection, considering how poorly Codemasters have done the job that I realise I don't think I even thought about such matters when playing *Crysis* because it had got it so right. In fact, the more I think about it, I seem to recall that *Crysis* didn't have the quicksave ability but the placing of their save points was spot on.

**Gary Fisher**

David replies: "I'm pretty certain that *Crysis* did have quicksaves and I'm also not sure exactly what relevance that game has to *Dragon Rising*, other than the fact the enemies were both of Oriental descent.

"Other than that, I'll defend the score I gave the game to the death (metaphorically). I loved playing it and I didn't really have any issue with the checkpoints in terms of placement and the game was always challenging yet never impossible. And I'm pretty rubbish at games, so make of that what you will."

## SPELLBOUND

Am I really the only one who got wound up seeing "The ex-PC ZONE gang rally round and writes all the stuff David should of" in *Life* is a RollerCoaster?

I'd always assumed that people who write for a living had a better grasp of

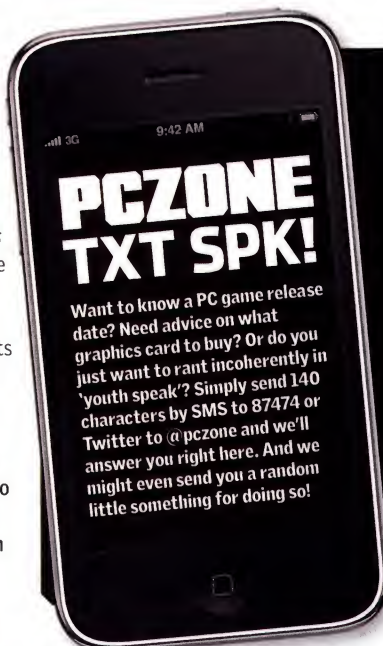
the English language than that, and frankly expected better of a magazine that I'd always judged to be well written.

You may have guessed that my rant is based on your mistake being the tip of the iceberg, but for some misplaced reason I'd thought that PC gamers tended to be better-read than most nowadays, and that you were representative of that.

However, now that my rant has petered out, I do have to concede that you're still a good read.

**D. Marshall**

"Have" didn't fit. Soz about tat. Well tire herder.



ur incoming pgs r rly usfl thx.  
**Jimmer**

We're glad you like it! We thought we'd finally share our amazing foresight with you.

Why no *Dragon Age Origins* cover? In fact why no big fanfare over the review?  
**mOnk1974**

You must be a subscriber as we went BIG with it on the mag's bag you didn't see.

Ooo free shiny headphones! What's the occasion?  
**Halrick**

Just a special deal we had running in ASDA. You can get them in Morrisons this month. ASDA have the CVG Presents *World of Warcraft* book.

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## PLANTS VS ZOMBIES

Chris Hall  
PC ZONE SCORE 82%

I didn't realise I suffered from obsessive-compulsive disorder until I played *Plants vs Zombies*.

From the first round of attacking zombies in the demo game, to throwing my money at the shrine that is *Steam*, to finally lying exhausted but elated with my Tree of Wisdom at 1,000 feet, this game grabs you and does not let go. It has to be the ultimate casual game. It has both depth and breadth – the mini-games are as excellent as the main game.

I dream of playing *Plants vs Zombies 2*, perhaps it might even have one-vs-one multiplayer. Brains!

**YOUR SHOUT 90%**



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Modern Warfare 2 has angered many PC gamers.

## ➤ CRASH SMASH

With the release of *Crash Course* for *Left 4 Dead* I would just like to congratulate Valve for a job well done. After the announcement of *Left 4 Dead 2* many people (myself included) thought that was it for *L4D*. I believed that Valve's promises of more maps and more content would never come into being and instead I'd have to wait until *L4D2* before I saw something new.

However, since the announcement of *L4D2*, when it would have been easier for them to release nothing new for *L4D*, Valve have not only allowed custom maps to be uploaded but also designed a brand spanking new scenario for us.

So hurrah for Valve, I for one will never doubt you again.

**Kev E**



We want photos of you with *PC ZONE* in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

## "We couldn't report on it, as it didn't happen in time"

I always thought Valve could be trusted. Could they be the hardest working developer in the industry? Yes if you side with Kev, no if you side with Rob. I'm going with 'yes'. Now go and read the *L4D2* review!

### WOT NO MW2?

I bought your magazine today as I always do, but for the first time ever I opened it the minute I got home, why? I naively thought an issue that has had over 170,000 PC gamers sign a petition on it would be highlighted and discussed in your magazine, but, there was nothing!

Worse than that, you actually had a piece on the multiplayer aspect of *Modern Warfare 2*, and still didn't even refer to the issue! Now, either, you and your staff live in a bubble or else you purposely chose to ignore it, one would have to assume it's the latter. How can you justify this?

**Stuart**

I understand your frustrations, but I guess it hasn't occurred to you that we actually went to print before

all this happened? We went to press on 12 October, and we have to get everything written even earlier than that. As the whole controversy exploded on 18 October, we simply couldn't report on it, as it all kicked off as the magazine was being printed.

We have written about it in this issue though, so I think you will forgive us!

### GORDON: L4D?

What the hell are Valve up to? The recent backlash against them has been from *Left 4 Dead* players about the hasty development of *L4D2*, yet everyone's favourite bespectacled boffin, Gordon

Freeman, has been sat twiddling his thumbs for over two years now. Episodic gaming? Ha! How *L4D2* could have possibly been given higher priority to completing the *Half-Life* saga is unbelievable. Valve, put the zombies down (the non-headcrab



Gordon: where the hell are you?



## LOST IN THE POST

LETTERS FROM OUR DECADE-OLD MAILBAG, ANSWERED TODAY

### GIMME SHAGGING!

You know all these violent, sexist games that are corrupting games players and turning them from quiet well-adjusted human beings into slaving maniacs? Well, where do I get them from?

**R Hunt, Dewesbury, W. Yorks.**

Another *Lost in the Post* taken from the very first issue of *PC ZONE* in 1993. This letter made me laugh as it just goes to show that in over 20 years games' reputations haven't changed (not including that Wii thingie, which is really a toy).

As for where to find them, I can tell you where not to find them and that's on this month's disc which embarrassingly is rated 12. Yes 12. What a shocker!

variety anyway) and finish off what you began!

I'd say they need to take a leaf out of BioWare's book, how they can churn out quality, epic, and original work like they were PopCap games is amazing. I'm really looking forward to *Mass Effect 2: Episode 3* about 18 months ago.

And when was the last time *PC ZONE* spoke to Valve about *Episode 3* and what was said?

**Rob Owens**

Valve haven't spoken to us about what's going on with *Half-Life 2* on the record for some time now, but as soon as we have anything concrete we can run with, we will. But Valve are developers that do things in their own time. In the meantime, can I point you in the direction of our *L4D2* review on page 56? Maybe that will change your mind. **PCZ**



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**COVER STORY**

# BIOSHOCK 2

The flooded ruins of Rapture harbour a shocking secret – some things are better off left in the dark...





**T**HERE'S SOMETHING IN the sea. There's lots of somethings in the sea, in fact. One of the biggest revelations to come of our trip to 2K Marin is that the Big Sister isn't alone. Instead she's part of a sorority – the kind least likely the engage in sexy late-night pillow fights. One was bad enough, but a troupe of Big Sisters is something to be feared: their arrivals are heralded by howls of anguish, giving you scarcely enough time to lay traps and prepare for their violent attack. They hurl you into the air with psionic powers, slam you into brassy bulkheads and skewer you with their needle-like appendages. Now, we've fought the Sisters Grim and returned to tell the tale...

PAGE

40



**PCZONE**

# UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the **world of PC gaming**

## AWARDS TIME

**E**VERYONE'S GOT ON an opinion so make sure yours is heard. You may have seen the announcement of the PC ZONE Reader Awards 2009, in association with Alienware, in last month's issue, but since then the Award's website has gone live and we've been telling anyone who'll listen.

Point your mouse clicker to this web address [futurecompetitions.com/pczra](http://futurecompetitions.com/pczra) and have your say. Do you think it's been a good or bad year for PC gaming? And which developer do you think should get acknowledged as the best in their field? Plus, we really want to know what you're looking forward to next. You never know, by voting you might just win something, which would be bloody generous seeing as we're giving away an amazing amount of goodies this month (page 38), but I'll see what I can do.

Speaking of awards, the annual Golden Joysticks took place last month and I got to present an award for the very first time, although I was terrified a wardrobe malfunction would take place, à la Judy Finnigan at the 2000 National TV Awards. I needn't have worried, it was all fine and I even got to meet Danny Wallace back stage, who was really lovely. Host Sean Lock failed to make an impression on me though, he rattled through the awards like he had a somewhere else he'd rather be!

Ali Wood

**Ali Wood**

Editor

[ali.wood@futurenet.com](mailto:ali.wood@futurenet.com)

## DLC RISING

Go back to Skira for another tour of duty as *Dragon Rising* begins its expansion assault

DEVELOPER Codemasters PUBLISHER Codemasters WEBSITE [flashpointgame.com](http://flashpointgame.com) ETA Out now

**T**HE DUST MIGHT have only just settled on the initial *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising* campaign, but that doesn't mean the fight against the PLA is over just yet.

Players who think they've seen and done it all have only just begun their tour of duty, if Codies' plans for regular expansions come to fruition. The first of these add-ons will be with us by the time you read this. *Skirmish* features four new multiplayer maps to battle on and also two

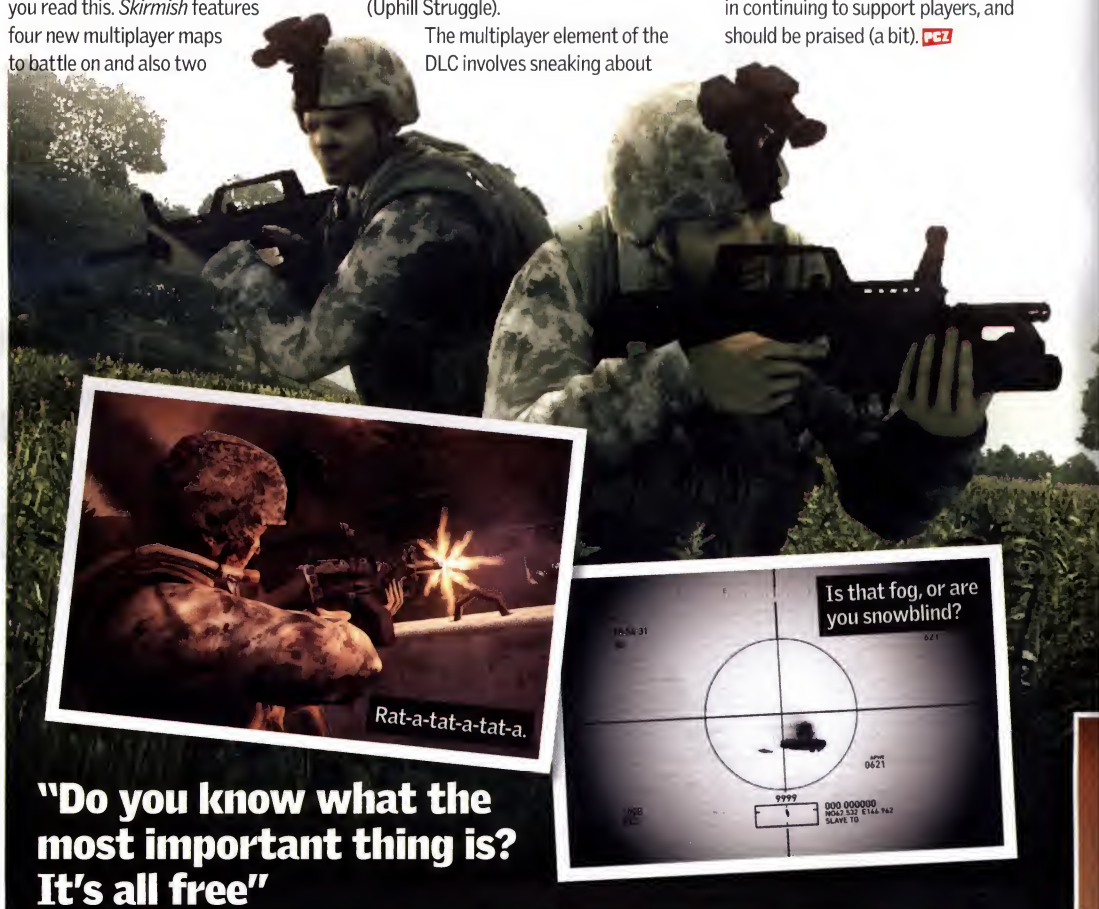
more FTE missions to keep you occupied. (Oh, and FTE means Fire Team Engagement, incidentally.)

These two missions can be done in either solo or co-op modes, where you are given the task of defending a fortified complex using air support and attack choppers to help you (All Round Defence) and capturing a bunker while being pounded by hillside PLA forces (Uphill Struggle).

The multiplayer element of the DLC involves sneaking about

in two new Infiltration maps, White Fang and Lumberyard. In the first one, the infiltrators have to destroy some SAM launchers in a big, you guessed it, lumberyard, while the second has you fighting room by room in a building.

There are also two new Annihilation maps too. But do you know what the most important thing is? It's all free for PC players. This sounds a good first step in continuing to support players, and should be praised (a bit). **PCZ**



**"Do you know what the most important thing is? It's all free"**

## STOP PRESS!

### BRAIN POWERED

Gray Matter, Jane Jensen's non-Gabriel Knight game, will finally get released in March 2010, now that publishing problems have been sorted out.

### DIAGNOSIS: FUN!

Perhaps the most exciting news this month is a game based on Dick Van Dyke's *Diagnosis: Murder* is coming to our PCs soon! Yes!

### RAGE SNUBS DEDI-SERVERS

Despite anger over a lack of dedicated server support for *Modern Warfare 2*, id's John Carmack has announced that *RAGE* won't have them either. Erk!



26

## AVP

The dreadlocked one is back. And so are his mates.



30

## A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Discover the true history of *World of Warcraft*.



40

## BIOSHOCK 2

Little Sisters and Big Daddies. Are there Medial Uncles coming?



# FALLOUT 3 GETS THE NOD

Voters give Bethesda a vote of confidence at the Golden Joysticks

WEBSITE [www.goldenjoystick.com](http://www.goldenjoystick.com)

**IT SEEMS LIKE** just last year we were writing about the Golden Joysticks and wondering if Activision could dominate again.

Well, it's *deja vu* time as yes, it was last year that we wrote about it and yes, Activision have once again beaten down all competition, except for one plucky little outsider. Strange to call *Fallout 3* that, but when it's going up against the *Call of Duty* juggernaut, it's the only description that fits.



*Fallout 3* managed to scoop the Ultimate Game of the Year gong, much to the surprise of the assembled suits and advertising people. *Left 4 Dead* rose to the occasion and gained the Online Game of the Year award, although it was pipped to the post for



An award for *Fallout 3*...



...and another one later on.

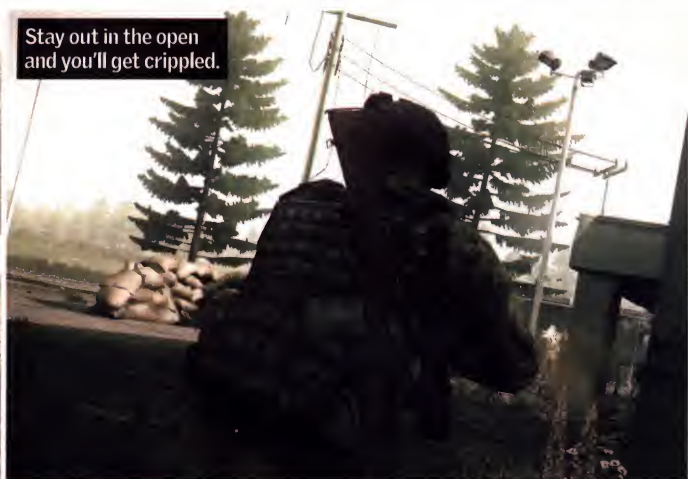
MSN Multiplayer Game of the Year, which went to *Call of Duty: World at War*. It didn't even manage to win PC Game of the Year, which *Fallout 3* scooped in a smash-and-grab one-two.

The major surprise of the night, though, was that Jagex – the people behind *RuneScape* – won the UK Developer of the Year for their work on

the said free-to-play MMO.

Rumours that the entire games industry then formed into two giant orgy piles right there at the venue are unsubstantiated. See you again next year, when *Modern Warfare 2* will win everything 20 times.

Stay out in the open and you'll get crippled.



Annihilation maps will feature vehicles heavily.



## STUFF

A sad day for all PC gamers, veteran or otherwise. The man who came up with one of the most iconic pieces of gaming artwork – the logo and box art for *Doom* – Don Ivan Puchatz, passed away at the age of 73. Puchatz was well known outside of the games industry too, contributing to publications such as *Playboy*, *Time* and *Heavy Metal*. His son also worked on *Doom*-related artwork, fashioning some sculptures of characters from the franchise. While most will never have heard his name, Puchatz's work will always be remembered.

## LIFE IS A ROLLER COASTER

GOOD TIMES

PCZ veteran Keith Pullin stepped into the breach to cover the still-absent David. There was much rejoicing.

Hurray! David came back, bearing his crutch like a mystical object into the office. There was much rejoicing.

What words they were! *BioShock 2*, *Modern Warfare 2*, *Left 4 Dead 2* and *DIRT 2*. Supplies of hyperbole were quickly exhausted.

ON THE FENCE

Keith's time was coming to an end and there was still no sign of the crippled David. Worried brows were furrowed in readiness.

After the rejoicing came the realisation that work still had to be done and the magazine actually needed words in it before it was released.

BAD TIMES

IT BEGINS AGAIN

SHIT! HOW LONG LEFT?

DEADLINE



# CRASH AND BURN

Where's the justice for those who buy buggy games, wonders *Pavel Barter*



**B**RAD WARDELL, CEO of US publishers Stardock, has heard it all. Every few weeks he receives an irate email from a PC gamer, ranging from "I hope you get cancer and die" to "Of all the nipples I have ever met, you take the biscuit".

"I don't know what that one means, but it sounds pretty nasty," Wardell sniffs. "We're always getting flamed online. It's part of the experience, it's not that big a deal."

Stardock, who has developed titles like *Galactic Civilizations* also receives lots of praiseworthy mail, but Wardell tends to remember the angry stuff. And he faced the game community's wrath when *Demigod* was released this year. The game's multiplayer, he admits, was a complete shambles: the network connectivity had been tested by a small group and when thousands of people across the globe joined in, it collapsed.

"People were really angry about it," he says. "The question then was, 'Who is

to blame?' Stardock is just the publisher, we didn't make *Demigod*. Gas Powered Games developed the game, but they didn't make the connectivity code.

"Obviously we're not going to throw some small third-party development shop under the bus. My personal position is, when in doubt, it is always my fault. It was Stardock's fault because we should have a much longer stress test."

## GLITCHY PCs

*Demigod*'s problems were sorted and the game was eventually greeted to applause, but its launch had a whiff of déjà vu. While console games rarely have major faults, their PC brethren often come loaded with bugs, glitches, and full-on crashes. *Empire: Total War*, for example, appeared to be held together with lollypop sticks and bubblegum. *Gothic 3*, *Pathologic*, and *Boiling Point* were riddled with alleged problems, and *Vampire: The*

*Masquerade – Bloodlines*, infamously, had more bugs than a tramp's knickers on its release.

If you shell out cash on something that doesn't work, you'll get your money back, right? But most PC developers and publishers backtrack by way of patches, covering their asses with EULAs. Valve, for example, has a strict no-refund policy when it comes to buying from *Steam* (steampowered.com). Although it did back down when the crap-bucket port of *GTA4* annoyed everyone from Sheffield to Shanghai.

For all his mistakes with *Demigod*, Wardell knows all too well that a customer who buys a broken product deserves a refund. Stardock, which operates digital distribution service *Impulse* (impulsi.com), put their

money where their mouth is. "We don't just refund people who buy off *Impulse*," says Wardell. "We refund even if they bought it at retail. We take a loss on it. We have found, through our research, that our users tend to be repeat buyers. They buy a lot of games. If they have a good experience buying from us, they're likely to buy again. It's in our best interests to do everything we can to make sure the customer is happy."

He continues: "We don't give refunds just because someone didn't like the game. It's not shareware or anything, but if someone has a legitimate problem with the game – say it runs too slow on a computer, or it's not compatible with a video card – we refund." Stardock's policy has been out of the step with the rest of the industry, though. "A lot of

companies think Stardock is naive, or we're hippies. That's really not the case: it's just business."

As angry as you may be about getting a buggy title, would you want the law to get involved? Meglena Kuneva, EU Consumer Affairs Commissioner, is putting forward legislation that would legally oblige

digital game distributors to give refunds for games, putting games in the same category in consumer law as household appliances.

"Commissioner Kuneva is committed to ensuring that consumers of digital content services have the same protection as that offered to consumers in the traditional (offline) marketplace," her spokesperson Emer Traynor told us. "She is perfectly aware that the specific characteristics of digital products will have to be taken into account in any future regulatory initiative."

Gravity forgets its role in *GTA4*.

**ERROR**

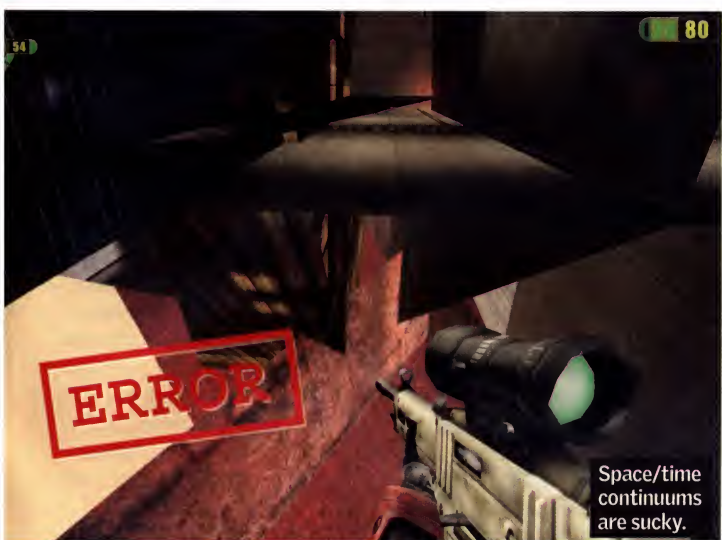


We've heard of nuclear deformity, *Fallout 3*, but this is stretching it.

**ERROR**







This call to arms has been praised by tech expert Andy Tanenbaum, author of books like *Operating Systems: Design and Implementation*. "I think the idea that commercial software be judged by the same standards as other commercial products is not so crazy," he says. "Cars, TVs, and telephones are all expected to work, and they are full of software. Why not standalone software? I think such legislation would put software makers under pressure to first make sure their software works, then worry about more bells and whistles."

For the games industry, though, it could have nasty implications. After all, a bug can range from a random crash to an AI orc with his arse stuck in a

castle wall. Look hard enough and you'll find bugs in any PC game: legal refunds could lead to fraudulent claims and industry death.

## MONEY TROUBLE

"We empathise with the need, on the part of the consumer, to be able to purchase products that work," says Dr Richard Wilson, CEO of TIGA, the industry body for UK developers (tiga.org). "We understand that. At the same time, UK developers are operating in a very competitive environment. This would put UK and EU game developers at a disadvantage against competitors elsewhere in the world."

Francisco Mingorance, Director of Public Policy at Europe's Business Software Appliance, believes digital

**"We need to ensure a customer gets good value for money"**

Brad Wardell, CEO, Stardock



## SON OF A GLITCH

Nothing bugs us more than a buggy game



### VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE - BLOODLINES (2004)

Troika's troubled masterpiece brought new meaning to the term "unfinished business". The constant crashes and floating objects were far creepier than any undead bloodsucker, and a load of hidden content was buried beneath the code. However, gamers embraced *Masquerade's* weird world, taking it under their wing like a sick kitten.



### BOILING POINT: ROAD TO HELL (2005)

If the PC port of *GTA4* had tonsillitis, *Boiling Point* had full-blown AIDS, what with dodgy frame rates, disappearing cars, and missions that completed themselves when you didn't even lift a finger. Underneath was a decent game, and the gaffs often made hilarious viewing, although it was like getting kicks from driving a car with no brakes.



### GTA4 (2008)

The initial PC port of RockStar's crime caper was allegedly more troubled than Afghanistan. Many users reported disappearing landscapes, vehicles spookily travelling along floating roads, and the inability to customise the graphics settings. Valve eventually relented, offering refunds to people who purchased the game through *Steam* on a case-by-case basis.



### EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR (2009)

A portion of the PC game community declared total war on SEGA's otherwise brilliant RTS. "I appreciate the game would be amazing, fully worthy of 9/10, if in fact it would work for more than 10 minutes," says peeved *PC ZONE* reader Paul Rooney. Creative Assembly have been on the case with patches, but some players reckon that the game is still running poorly.

content should not be subject to the same rules as toasters, pointing out that software is susceptible to malware, modification, and piracy. Also, the commissioner's proposal could affect products like downloads, patches and updates, he says.

Wardell believes enforced refunds would be a disaster. "When *Demigod* came out, there were people who couldn't launch the game, but it turned out to be due to *Google Desktop*. It had a system hook that was preventing *Demigod* from launching on some people's machines. We had to work around it. But whose bug is that? It wasn't really a bug at all: it was just incompatibility. Retailers are not in any position to make that call."

Nevertheless, there is no excuse for a rushed game that makes your life a misery. TIGA's Wilson says developers and publishers need realistic timetables for producing and delivering games.

Shipping faulty products, after all, ruins our fun, and damages the industry.

"We need to ensure a customer gets good value for money," says Wardell. "By doing so, they are more likely to purchase more. These are concepts that have been with us for thousands and thousands of years."

"In the technology industry, it seems like some people have decided that those long-standing rules don't apply any more. The reason we treat customers well is simple: we want them to continue buying from us." **PCZ**

**Is there anything you want PC ZONE to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)**

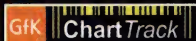
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**PCZONE** Charts

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- 1 **NEW** **FOOTBALL MANAGER 2010**  
Issue 214 - 88%
- 2 **NEW** **BORDERLANDS**  
Issue 215 - 88%
- 3 **↓** **THE SIMS 3**  
Issue 208 - 92%
- 4 **↓** **CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2010**  
Issue 214 - 80%
- 5 **NEW** **OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING**  
Issue 213 - 90%
- 6 **NEW** **FALLOUT 3: GAME OF THE YEAR EDITION**  
N/A
- 7 **↓** **WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WRATH OF LICH KING**  
Issue 202 - 86%
- 8 **NEW** **FIFA MANAGER 10**  
Issue 215 - 72%
- 9 **NEW** **PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2010**  
Issue 215 - 85%
- 10 **↓** **EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR**  
Issue 206 - 78%
- 11 **NEW** **CSI: DEADLY INTENT**  
N/A
- 12 **↓** **WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR II**  
Issue 205 - 78%
- 13 **↓** **GRAND THEFT AUTO IV**  
Issue 203 - 91%
- 14 **↑** **SPORE**  
Issue 199 - 95%
- 15 **↓** **AION**  
Issue 214 - 80%
- 16 **RE** **THE SIMS 2: DOUBLE DELUXE**  
N/A
- 17 **↓** **BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM**  
Issue 214 - 89%
- 18 **↓** **FALLOUT 3**  
Issue 201 - 91%
- 19 **↓** **FIFA 10**  
Issue 214 - 66%
- 20 **↓** **BLOOD BOWL**  
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**8. FIFA MANAGER 10**

A chance to control your very own team of football players, in slightly less detail.

**19. FIFA 10**

It's kind of like *Pro Evolution Soccer 2010*, except it has proper teams in it, and it's nowhere near as good.



# 12 STEPPERS

## UK's first gaming rehab centre opens

**WEBSITE** [broadwaylodge.co.uk](http://broadwaylodge.co.uk)

**EVER FELT YOU** played games too much? Did a break from the computer mean moving to the bed and firing up the laptop for a few rounds of *Peggle*? Help is now at hand thanks to the Broadway treatment centre in Weston-Super-Mare.

Four hundred addicts a year are treated there for various vices such as drink, drugs and gambling, but now gaming is at the end of that list.

Treatment involves doing a lot of things that aren't gaming-related, with patients advised not to construct some

sort of high score table and turn these exercises into a competition.

Game addiction is treated just as seriously by the centre as more famous conditions, treatment being based is based on a 12-step course. Shared communication is the order of the day, although presumably that doesn't mean they just talk about videogames all day.

According to the centre's chief executive, a recent patient had been spending eight hours in a row playing games every day. Only eight hours? Pssh, lightweight.

# WHAT THE DEUS

## Spector failed to get *Deus Ex* rights

**WEBSITE** [deusex3.com](http://deusex3.com)

**WARREN SPECTOR, THE** brain behind *Deus Ex* and one of the most revered developers in PC gaming (as well as his dog Maggie), has revealed that he tried to liberate the *Deus Ex* license from the hands of Eidos.

In an interview with *Variety*, Spector said he still had lots of ideas for stories based in the *Deus Ex* universe, which almost lead to the creation of a new game, identical to *Deus Ex* in theme, just with the "the serial numbers (filed off)".

Interestingly, this wasn't the only thing he was considering working on in the period before he decided to waste his time with *Epic Mickey* for Disney.

Spector also mentioned there was also a "big, big fantasy game... I had been wanting to do for about 15 years". We're all intrigued now, Warren, you



can't tease us like that and then leave us hanging.

The good news for us is that the projects aren't lost to the mists of time, because Disney acquired the rights to both of them when they took over Spector's company Junction Point.

Let's keep our fingers, toes and any other crossable body parts crossed for more on these works.



# YOU GOT SERVERED

## Matchmaking in *Modern Warfare 2* causes controversy

WEBSITE [modernwarfare2.infinityward.com](http://modernwarfare2.infinityward.com)

**INFINITY WARD ARE** facing a gruelling time from PC gamers over their decision to drop dedicated server support in *Modern Warfare 2*.

The story broke when Robert Bowling of Infinity Ward revealed in a webcast that *Modern Warfare 2* would use a matchmaking service – IWNet – for the multiplayer games.

The reaction has been unfavourable, to say the least. Mere days passed before 100,000 people signed an online petition ([snipurl.com/mw2petition](http://snipurl.com/mw2petition)) decrying the move. As this issue goes to press, the number of signatures had nearly reached 185,000.

This change means players won't be able to browse server lists to pick a host any more. Also, thanks to the game using Valve's Steamworks, Valve's VAC anti-cheat system will replace *Punkbuster*.

Private matches with friends can be set up, but forget about holding LAN matches, dedicated servers and any

form of clan community growing up around the game.

Support for mods and maps has been, at the time of writing, ruled out as well. DLC will be appearing, according to Bowling, but you'll have to pay for it. This could be why mod support has been cut.

Also, Activision have confirmed that players won't be able to kick cheaters from matches, and neither will console commands be available. Hosts will be automatically picked and a five-second delay will occur if a host quits the game.

On top of all this, basics like mouse control, text chat and custom graphics options are being touted as "extras" for *Modern Warfare 2*'s PC version!

Bowling has said that *Modern Warfare 2* is the most "feature-rich PC version... ever made. IWNet takes the benefits of dedicated servers and allows them to be utilised and accessed by every player, out of the box, while removing the barrier to entry for players unaware of how to maintain a server on their own".

*Read our review on page 52.*



**"Support for mods and maps has also been ruled out as well"**

"Said you should have packed a parachute."



# Incoming

All dates are correct at time of press!

**N**EVER MIND 'THE Future', this month we had the biggest and best dilemma of the year: which is the biggest game out of *Left 4 Dead 2*, *Modern Warfare 2* and *Borderlands*?

It feels like we've been waiting the entire year for such a conundrum and we've been looking forward to all three for

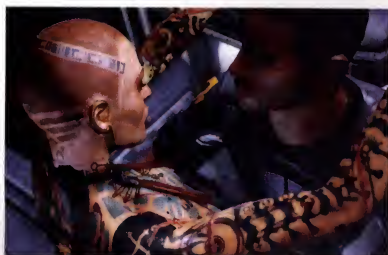
different reasons. So you'd expect the first couple of months of 2010 to be quiet, right? Wrong. Already we have three games vying for issue 218's cover (out in February), and 219 is looking pretty hot too. All we need now is for Blizzard to confirm a few release dates and that's the first six issues of 2010 in the bag. Does that mean we can take a holiday now?

## MASS EFFECT 2

While BioWare officially confirmed a 29 January release for *Mass Effect 2*, a leak has disclosed their ambitious plans for downloadable content. Characters, combat content, and episodic expansions are in the pipeline. The news was revealed in a retailer survey, the "Microsoft Expert Zone" quiz, which listed weapon and armour packs, new worlds, as well as "full campaign expansions for download".

Also planned are periodic updates and DLC delivered by the game's in-game 'Cerberus

Network'. This all sounds great, but we're keeping our fingers crossed a repeat of DLC disappointment from the first *Mass Effect* is not on the cards.



## BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

DICE have confirmed March's release of *Bad Company 2* will come with a limited edition version for the same price. This will have six special customisations to give players advantages in multiplayer matches: four vehicle warfare unlocks for extra firepower, radar, and armour for the vehicles.

Additionally, the tracer dart attaches to any enemy vehicle and allows teammates to track and destroy enemies. And veterans of *Battlefield 1943* will be re-acquainted with the M1A1 submachine

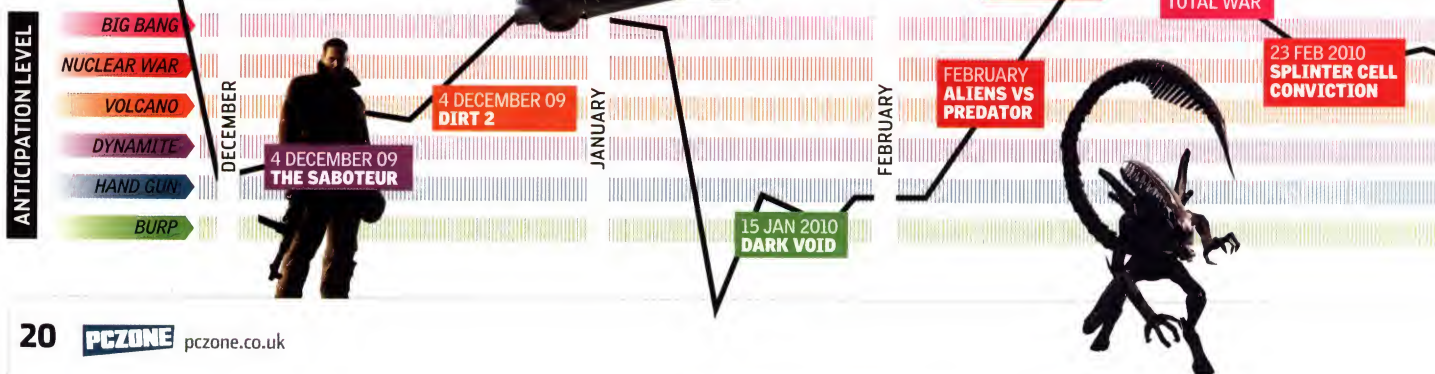
gun and the M1911 pistol (below). Plus, unlike *MW2*, DICE have confirmed *Bad Company 2* will have dedicated multiplayer server support.



GAME	PUBLISHER	ETA
ALLODS	GPQATO	NOVEMBER
THE SABOTEUR	EA	4 DECEMBER
JAMES CAMERON'S AVATAR	UBISOFT	4 DECEMBER
COLIN MCRAE: DIRT 2	CODEMASTERS	DECEMBER
PLANET 51	SEGA	DECEMBER
VANCOUVER 2010	SEGA	DECEMBER
DARK VOID	CAPCOM	15 JANUARY
MASS EFFECT 2	EA	29 JANUARY
STAR TREK ONLINE	ATARI	5 FEBRUARY
BIOSHOCK 2	2K GAMES	9 FEBRUARY
DANTE'S INFERNO	EA	12 FEBRUARY
THE WHISPERED WORLD	DEEP SILVER	12 FEBRUARY
HISTORY GREAT BATTLES: MEDIEVAL	SLITHERINE	19 FEBRUARY
SHIP SIMULATOR EXTREMES	PARADOX	19 FEBRUARY
SPLINTER CELL CONVICTION	UBISOFT	26 FEBRUARY
ALIENS VS PREDATOR	SEGA	FEBRUARY
NAPOLEON: TOTAL WAR	SEGA	FEBRUARY
JUST CAUSE 2	EIDOS	FEBRUARY
M.U.D. TV	KALYPSO	FEBRUARY
BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2	EA	5 MARCH

## AHEAD OF THE GAME TIMELINE

Take heed readers - this chart shows how excited we are over the biggest games that are coming out of the next 12 months.





<b>MOUNT &amp; BLADE: WARBAND</b>	PARADOX	19 MARCH
<b>ALL POINTS BULLETIN</b>	EA	MARCH
<b>POLE POSITION 2010</b>	KALYPSO	APRIL
<b>DARK STAR ONE</b>	KALYPSO	APRIL
<b>VICTORIA 2</b>	PARADOX	18 JUNE
<b>ALPHA PROTOCOL</b>	SEGA	SPRING 2010
<b>ASSASSIN'S CREED II</b>	UBISOFT	SPRING 2010
<b>BLUR</b>	ACTIVISION	SPRING 2010
<b>BRINK</b>	BETHESDA	SPRING 2010
<b>COMMAND &amp; CONQUER 4: TIBERIUM TWILIGHT</b>	EA	SPRING 2010
<b>DC UNIVERSE ONLINE</b>	SOE	SPRING 2010
<b>DOGFIGHTER</b>	KALYPSO	SPRING 2010
<b>FINAL FANTASY XIV</b>	SQUARE ENIX	SPRING 2010
<b>THE FIRST TEMPLAR</b>	KALYPSO	SPRING 2010
<b>I AM ALIVE</b>	UBISOFT	SPRING 2010
<b>JUMP GATE EVOLUTION</b>	CODIES ONLINE	SPRING 2010
<b>MAFIA II</b>	2K GAMES	SPRING 2010
<b>METRO 2033</b>	THQ	SPRING 2010
<b>MAX PAYNE 3</b>	ROCKSTAR	30 MARCH
<b>R.U.S.E.</b>	UBISOFT	SPRING 2010
<b>SILENT HUNTER 5</b>	UBISOFT	SPRING 2010
<b>SINGULARITY</b>	ACTIVISION	SPRING 2010
<b>SPLIT/SECOND</b>	DISNEY	SPRING 2010
<b>STARCRRAFT II: WINGS OF LIBERTY</b>	BLIZZARD	SPRING 2010
<b>TWO WORLDS II</b>	SOUTHPEAK	SPRING 2010
<b>WORLD OF WARCRAFT: CATAclysm</b>	BLIZZARD	SPRING 2010
<b>THE SECRET WORLD</b>	FUNCOM	SUMMER 2010
<b>THE AGENCY</b>	SOE	2010
<b>ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES</b>	SEGA	2010
<b>CRYSIS 2</b>	EA	2010
<b>DAWN OF WAR II: CHAOS THEORY</b>	THQ	2010
<b>DEUS EX 3</b>	EIDOS	2010
<b>DIABLO III</b>	BLIZZARD	2010

## BRINK

While we love Splash Damage, we still died a little inside when we heard this from boss, Paul Wedgwood. Does that make us childish?



"About two or three years ago we realised that we wouldn't survive if we only made PC games, since only making PC games was incompatible with our goal of making triple-A games. You just can't get the publisher budget to ever use an orchestra in London, then go and record at Abbey Road, and get the best voice actors if you're only going to release on the PC, where there isn't the sales to justify that kind of work." Still, *Brink*'s looking scrumptious, so maybe it's not such a bad thing.

## METRO 2033

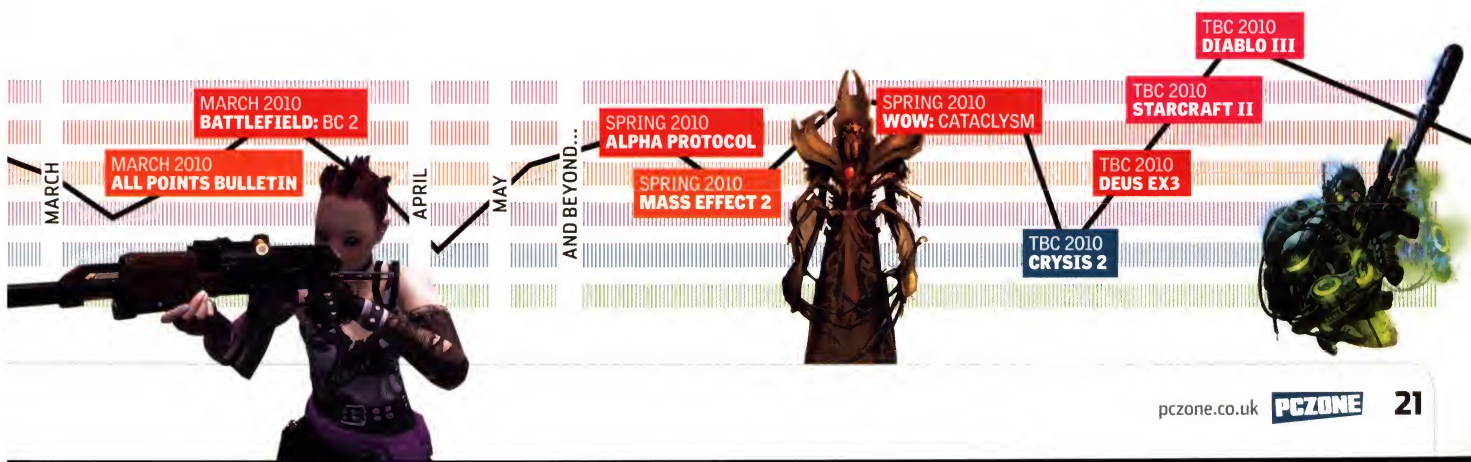
*Metro 2033* has been announced. No, not *Metro 2033: The Last Refuge*, that game no longer exists. This is a new FPS from 4A Games (yes they were

working on the game we no longer talk about), based on the Russian novel of the same name set in a post-nuclear apocalypse Moscow.



*Metro 2033* puts you in the shoes of a survivor of a nuclear blast that happened while you're on the metro; consequently, your life and missions will take place mostly underground. As we type Log's in a bunker in Moscow seeing the game, so we'll know more next month. But we hear it's shaping up to be as good as *STALKER*.

<b>DUNGEONS</b>	KALYPSO	2010
<b>FI</b>	CODEMASTERS	2010
<b>FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS</b>	BETHESDA	2010
<b>HOMEFRONT</b>	THQ	2010
<b>METAL GEAR SOLID: RISING</b>	KONAMI	2010
<b>PATRICIAN IV</b>	KALYPSO	2010
<b>PRISON BREAK</b>	DEEP SILVER	2010
<b>RAGE</b>	EA	2010
<b>S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: CALL OF PRIPYAT</b>	BITCOMPOSER	2010
<b>STAR WARS: THE OLD REPUBLIC</b>	EA/LUCASARTS	2010
<b>SUPREME COMMANDER 2</b>	SQUARE ENIX	2010





JON 'LOG' BLYTH...

# DOMINATION THROUGH ADORATION



**L**ast month, I won an award. It's got GMA written on it, but when you Google that, you just get loads of stuff about Philippine TV, gospel music, and grid management architecture.

So, whatever happened, and for whatever reason, I'm now the unambiguous owner of a sharp-cornered Perspex cuboid with my name stencilled onto it.

As you can imagine, I've refused to talk about anything else ever since, and I'm certainly not ready to change the subject yet. But, having won an award (an achievement that, like titles in *Lord of the Rings Online*, allows you to prefix your name with "award-winning" or "superior human"), you'll surely agree that it's no longer my duty to inform or entertain you. The onus is now on you, the reader, to enjoy whatever it is that I choose to say, no matter how pointless, obnoxious and self-indulgent I become.

Jon Blyth is now a husk, a snakeskin sloughed by a dusty roadside. I shall now go by my new name, Anna Ward. Dressed head to toe in translucent silk, I am a beautiful butterfly, finally freed from the cocoon that the snakeskin, kind of, was. Don't ask my images to make sense. If you don't understand them you should try harder. That's what people did with Jim Morrison – he talked a load of shit, if everyone's being honest, but bang on about having sex with your mum and suddenly it's poetry.

People keep saying, where next? Well, I reckon I've got two more years left of talking about this, before I need to start worrying about "anything else". Already, people have started noticing how much I'm talking about this award, and are encouraging me with phrases like "Log, you've changed" (Yes! I've got an award now!) and "Log, you've become a one-track, insufferable prick who's deeply unpleasant to spend any amount of time around" (Oh, you guys!). But I suppose it makes sense to plan ahead – so here's my four-step plan to universal dominion.

## 1. WIN ALL THE OTHER AWARDS

I've got my heart set on the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, and maybe a MOBO. But I'm acutely aware that going for awards one at a time will take ages, so I might just rap about Doric columns and go for a combo. Better still, I could focus on one explosive display of brilliance that attracts all the awards like those little golden balls of mana in *Magic Carpet*. (See – I've even remembered that I'm writing for a PC games magazine. You've got to admit that that's pretty damn professional!)

## 2. WORK ON A BETTER SPEECH

My speech consisted of me saying "Oh, I don't think..." before choking on my words, squinting into the crowd, and trying again. "I don't think... I'm going to be very good at this."



If you want to enter into a debate with this professional opinion stater, you can contact Log by the methods below.

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ Mr Log, PC ZONE, 2 Balcombe St, London, NW1 6NW

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**"You can't deny that I'm an award-winner. Even if the sharp corners of the award gouge my face when I make out with it"**

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At that point, I remembered my manners, and that it's nice to say thank you. So I said thank you, before realising I had nothing else to say. "I've got to go now," I said, and ran off stage.

To avoid future confusion, I've already written my next speech: a gigantic shirtless bellow, and a profane demand for more wine.

## 3. DEVELOP A STRONGER SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT

So far in life, I've responded to kindnesses with gratitude. That has to stop. The desirable objects of the world now belong to me: and if my cushions aren't plumped to hell and back I'm going to throw telephones at your head.

I've already negotiated a set of rules with my partner whereby my whims are magicked into existence. The shortness of his shrift displeased me, so I directed him to the door with a lazy flick of the wrist.

Still, who needs companionship? I might be friendless, incoherent, single, and using the word freelance as a respectable veil for disrespectful unemployment, but you can't deny that I'm an award-winner. Even if the sharp corners of the award gouge my face when I try to make out with it.

## 4. TALK ABOUT GAMES AT SOME POINT

So, is everyone excited about *Diablo III*? I was, until I played through *Diablo II* again. God, that shit gets old quick. **PCZ**





# DARK FALL

JOIN IN ON THE MOST  
EPIC ONLINE BATTLES!

**Free  
Expansion!**

*Conquer the Seas*

**- No safe zones.  
Full loot. PvP  
everywhere with  
accountability**

**- Ultimate PvP action,  
the #1 choice of top  
players and clans**

**- No more leveling.  
Improve the skills  
you use**

**- Siege and conquer  
cities, build and  
protect your own**

**WARNING!**  
Contains intense  
ganking and looting.





1



# METRO 2033

DEVELOPER 4A Games PUBLISHER THQ [WEBSITE metro2033game.com](http://metro2033game.com) ETA Spring 2010

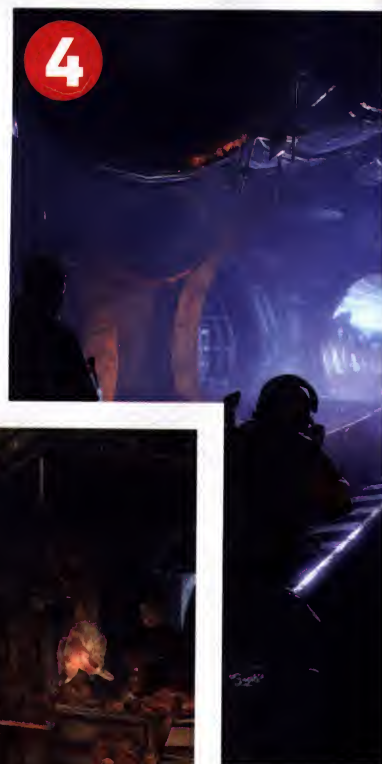
**LEARNING NEW THINGS** is always a good thing, like finding out about Russian author and journalist Dmitry Glukhovsky, the man whose work is being used as the inspiration for the latest ex-Soviet radiation-'em-up, *Metro 2033*.

We last took a look at this game back in issue 201 and it was definitely a work in progress back then. Well, progress

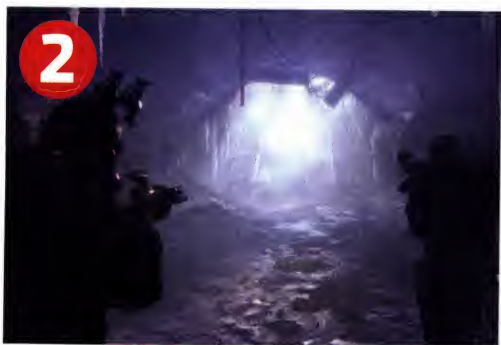
has been made and we can see some of the fruits of 4A's labours on these very pages.

Just to refresh your memories a little: 4A Games is the bit of GSC Gameworld that stuck with THQ after their split, and as such it's being put together by some of the people involved with the original *STALKER*, and involves an bleak, irradiated, and monster-infested Russia. Not at all like *STALKER* then.

4



2



3







## THE BIGGER PICTURE

### 1. POPULATION CONTROL

As you can see, it isn't just a handful of mercs hanging around a campfire for all eternity. Women, children and whole communities are milling about in the bits that aren't overly infested with lethal radioactive beasts.

### 2. LIGHT FANTASTIC

There's always a light at the end of the tunnel, but the world of *Metro 2033* will still be as bleak and terrifying as you might imagine in a game from the same blokes and blokettes who helped envision *STALKER*.

### 3. THE FAIRER SEX

Unlike the sausage-fest that was *STALKER*, women folk are invited to the party too. We don't know if 4A Games are radical enough to make them anything more than floppy haired decorations.

### 4. CANNON FODDER

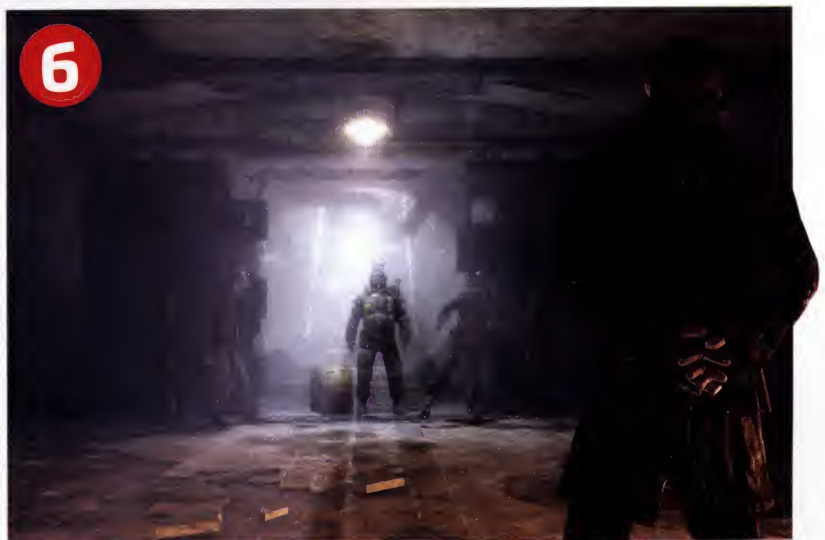
Weapons won't just be your usual collection of death-dealing hand cannons and sniper rifles. A lot will be cobbled-together efforts due to the scarcity of resources in future Russia. Our favourite is still the hand-pumped ball bearing gun.

### 5. DIRECT APPROACH

Because of the enclosed nature of the environments (a lot of the game will be underground on abandoned train platforms and such) the graphics can be all sparkling and lovely. Will it suffer from corridor-itis though?

### 6. STRAIGHT LINES

The developers are claiming that their story, based on the works of Glukhovsky, will be more immersive and interesting than *STALKER*'s rather baffling effort. Will it have seven different endings though? We'd like to think it will.







NOSTRONOMICAL...

# ALIENS VS PREDATOR

**Steve Hogarty** gets clubbed in the head and spurts white liquid everywhere

DEVELOPER Rebellion PUBLISHER SEGA [WEBSITE sega.co.uk/games/aliens-vs-predator](http://sega.co.uk/games/aliens-vs-predator)

**T**HAT I LEAPT a mile when a man dressed as an alien slinked into the room and made some stupid hissing noise at my face, during my multiplayer hands-on, says a lot for my state of mind. To be fair, if anybody hissed at my face like that I'd probably drop dead like a timid canary. It was only after I regained my composure and let out a nervous laugh that I even made the connection between the game I was playing and the costume of the man SEGA had employed to terrify me.

## THE LOWDOWN

- ✓ Races feel powerful
- ✓ Stealth kills work online
- ✓ Predator can cloak
- ✗ Animations look rigid
- ✗ Will it balance?

However, *Aliens vs Predator's* multiplayer isn't as terrifying as its single-player game. Or if it is, then certainly not in the same way. Online, the tension stems from not knowing who'll you face around the corner, be they alien, predator or that fragile collection of meat-and-blood sacks draped over a articulated coat-rack we call our human form. Ideally they're all equally effective foes. But before any notion of balance can effect itself, the more freakish looking two-thirds of the triumvirate appear to be the more immediately powerful foes.

## THE HISSY ONES

The aliens have got claws, you see. Melee attacks fall into a rock, paper, scissors style arrangement: your heavy attacks will break a block, a light attack can counter a slower heavy attack, and a well-timed block can stop a light



The twist in the tale...

attack in its tracks. Training yourself to recognise the animations, we're promised, will be key to winning fisticuffs, though here the Marine is at a disadvantage, as he can't use heavy attacks. Instead his penchant for ranged attacks (that is, his far-reaching pulse rifle) redresses the balance.

Meanwhile, while the predator's plasma cannon works at long range it's slow to arm and its bolts travel towards targets at a relaxed pace. And the alien can't even hold a gun. Stupid alien.

In this way, the three characters are in equal measures empowered and hobbled. Predators are effective at both close and long range, but they need to track down their best weapons before they can do anything interesting. Aliens maintain their ability to scoot up and down the walls, but they can't defend themselves from long-range attacks.

The ultra-violent trophy kills from single-player, which see the predator removing spines and aliens poking tails through chests, return online. These powerful stealth kills can be activated from behind any player, with the alien in particular able to stealth kill from a considerable distance. Marines can block alien lunges and counter with their own one-hit kill – a balls-of-steel neck-grab followed by a body slam and a few well-placed rounds to the skull.

Either way, opting for these fancy kills has you committing to a brief

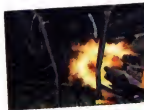


THE STORY SO FAR...  
**ALIENS VS  
PREDATOR**



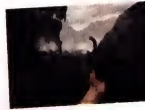
**AVP**  
The first *AvP* was the first game to let you run along walls.

1999



**AVP2**  
Monolith did the next one, and it was even better than the first.

2001



**SHELLSHOCKING**  
Rebellion's last game, *Shellshock 2*, was a huge turd.

2009

**AVP(3)**  
The game that you're looking at. Drippiest alien saliva ever.

2010

"And this is for the rubbish film!"

"And this is for the sequel to the rubbish film!"

ETA  
**FEB  
2010**

There'll be four-way co-op versus waves of zomb- erm, aliens.



**DAVID BRICKLEY**  
SENIOR PRODUCER, AVP

## THAT'S DEDICATION

Infinity Ward have shafted online communities by ditching support for dedicated servers in *Modern Warfare 2*. Will SEGA follow suit?

**Q** Historically *AvP* is a big PC game. Now are you making sure you support the PC version and keep your community happy?

**A** This is a title that we want to support for a long time to come. If it's not been announced yet then certainly the PC version will benefit from DirectX 11 features. That's one thing we can use to make sure that people who invest in the hardware will get the absolute best. And it was originally a PC title so you can imagine the heritage and the need within Rebellion to make sure that people who still play and talk of that game are not left behind.

**And are you guys going to have those dedicated servers the community so clearly expects?**

Well the one thing we can say is obviously running an operation like that is monumentally expensive. For the period the original was up, people who played that game got an incredible experience. You know what the internet's like. We're obviously used to getting things for free over the years. I guess on our side the thing we're focusing on is whatever your set-up at home, you get the best possible experience from it. We're just trying to use our time and resources wisely.

**So, um, is that a yes or a no on the dedicated servers?**

As I said, the game is still quite a way from release, so I guess there are other things to be determined during that time.

**Oooh, we are so good at questions.**

animation, during which you yourself can be made the target of an opponent's stealth kill. It's even possible for short conga-lines of stealth kill animations to form in matches staffed entirely by inexperienced yokels. In deathmatch, at least.

'Survivor' mode pits marines against waves of aliens, much like similar game modes in *World at War* and *Left 4 Dead*. 'Infestation' sees a squad of marines fighting a small contingent of player-controlled aliens in a match where, once killed, marine players are resurrected as

part of the alien team. Once the marines are whittled down to a single plucky soldier, that player's given a huge cache of weapons with which to make his last (and probably short) stand.

'Predator Hunt' is the final mode we're shown. Here, just one player is permitted to step into the skin of the master hunter, and must string together as many brutal murders as possible before he's shredded to bits by miniguns. Once that happens, control of the predator is handed over to whoever finally swatted him.

It's still much too early to even wonder if Rebellion can meet the expectations of those still playing the finely tuned and intricately balanced decade-old shooter which birthed the series. Even if it can, those strange people will have made up their minds to discover infinite disappointment in every pore of this game. Comparisons spanning 10 years are pointless – *Aliens vs Predator* should be a visceral, blood-soaked thrill in its own right.

But the trick will lie in the balance, and that's harder to gauge at this point. Rebellion have made each character feel uniquely powerful – that's apparent from our hands-on – but if unfair advantages float to the surface in the wake of thousands of players piling into multiplayer, we'll be just as disillusioned with the game's online content as the man in the alien costume is with his career prospects. The twat. **PCZ**

# "Should be a visceral, blood-soaked thrill in its own right"



# PCZONE

## READER AWARDS

# 2009

IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
**ALIENWARE**  ALL POWERFUL

**Have you heard? The PC ZONE Reader Awards are back and we want your vote!**

**T**HE WORLD-FAMOUS PC ZONE Reader Awards launched last month and we want you to tell us which game deserves to win an award!

The PC ZONE Reader Awards 2009 gives you, our beloved readers, a chance to tell publishers and developers where they've been going right, and we promise to print all the results in the New Year (issue 217, on sale 20 January).

We've listed the categories on the right and next to them a few suggestions of what to vote for in order to jolt your memories, although we know you'll voice your own opinions!

There are two easy ways to vote: fill in and cut out the handy form on this page and send it back to the address below, or vote online at the recently launched dedicated website located at: [futurecompetitions.com/pczra](http://futurecompetitions.com/pczra).

The only rules are that the games had to have been released between 9 December 2008 and 10 December 2009, and the Most Wanted game needs to be out after 9 December 2009. Votes need to be in no later than 11 December, 2009. And remember: you're only allowed one vote in each category.

What are you waiting for?



**YOUR LAST CHANCE TO VOTE**  
Go to: [futurecompetitions.com/pczra](http://futurecompetitions.com/pczra)



## THE CATEGORIES

Suggestions – not nominations – you could vote for

### BEST FPS

› Left 4 Dead 2 › ArMA II

### BEST MMO

› Aion › Champions Online

### BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE

› GTA4 › Batman: Arkham Asylum  
› The Secret of Monkey Island

### BEST DRIVING/RACING

› NFS: Shift › Colin McRae: DiRT 2 › Race On

### BEST RPG

› Fallout 3 › Dragon Age: Origins

### BEST INDIE GAME

› World of Goo › Time Gentlemen, Please!

### BEST SIM

› The Sims 3 › Tropico 3

### BEST DEVELOPER

› Valve › Creative Assembly › Rocksteady  
› Blizzard › Codemasters

### BEST SPORT

› Football Manager Live › Football Manager 2010  
› Championship Manager 2010

### GAME OF THE YEAR

› Empire: Total War › Batman: Arkham Asylum  
› Dragon Age: Origins

### BEST STRATEGY

› Empire: Total War › Order of War › Dawn of War II

### MOST WANTED

› AvP › StarCraft II › BioShock 2 › Napoleon:  
Total War › C&C4 › Star Wars: The Old Republic

## AWARDS VOTING FORM



BEST FPS  
BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE  
BEST RPG  
BEST SIM  
BEST SPORT  
BEST STRATEGY  
BEST MMO  
BEST DRIVING/RACING  
BEST INDIE GAME  
BEST DEVELOPER  
GAME OF THE YEAR  
MOST WANTED


### YOUR DETAILS

NAME	
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PC ZONE Reader Awards 2009, Future Publishing,  
2 Balcombe Street, London, NW1 6NW

**OR VOTE ONLINE**

[futurecompetitions.com/pczra](http://futurecompetitions.com/pczra)

Please tick if you do not want to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.  
TERMS AND CONDITIONS See page 129 for our full entry terms and conditions.



# HISTORY OF A BLIZZA

Blizzard veteran Shane Dabiri gets cornered by Adam Glick and reveals the foundations of Azeroth

**T**HREE YEARS AFTER Blizzard was founded, Shane Dabiri – now the lead producer on the next Blizzard MMO – stood at a 10ft by 10ft booth on the floor of the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada. Twiddling his thumbs, he smiled and demonstrated the first *Warcraft* game to a group of around 30 people.

"Back then I was one of our first beta testers for *Warcraft*. I did more supporting of the business than anything related to the games." Dabiri's humble beginnings as an IT guy, beta tester and general computer handyman

failed to tell of both him, and his company's, future successes.

Seven years later, Blizzard announced *World of Warcraft* to huge fanfare, and a big departure from their roots. "Up to that point we had been, for the most part, creators of games with multiplayer components to them. We always focused on not just the single-player component, but how we could get three people together to play an RTS, or a game like *Diablo*." He admits, though, that the inspiration wasn't totally from within. "Back then, *Ultima Online* and *EverQuest* started to become very popular."

"The MMO market was small, but a few of the guys in the office started playing. We saw the possibilities and we thought 'You know, in the future we have to do something like this.' I mean, with all of the stuff we were doing with Battle.Net, it made total sense to go in that direction – that, and a lot of us had been playing *EverQuest*."

## STEALING PLAYERS

In fact, their interest in *EverQuest* led Blizzard to poach several key players from the communities, including Fires of Heaven's Alex 'Furor' Afrasiabi and Jeff 'Tigole' Kaplan, who both went on to work on a great many of the quests in *World of Warcraft*. Kaplan now also works on the new Blizzard MMO with Dabiri, and was hired by Rob Pardo (Blizzard's Executive VP of Game Design), his *EverQuest* guild leader at the time.



"I think it was opportunistic. I mean, back then the MMO genre was still relatively small. There weren't many developers, and to find the best and brightest out there, you had to consider the gaming community. We didn't necessarily go out of our way to make the whole team that way, there were just a few opportunistic hires we had along the way."

Dabiri, regardless of *WoW*'s far-reaching success, claims that it doesn't spell the end of the *Warcraft* series.



## "Back then the MMO genre was still small"







# RD

## THEY CAN'T GET NO SATISFACTION

What Blizzard thinks of *WOW*'s whiniest whiners

"One good indication of a successful game is if your players are passionate. And ours are definitely a passionate crowd. They believe in the game so much that they want to help us improve it – we listen to their feedback. Of course, you're going to get some people out there who are going to tell you 'Blizzard are doing this and it's ruining the game!' But whenever we hear those things, we don't just turn a blind eye. We listen and try to analyse what we can do to improve the game."

"I think we're really fortunate to have our fans, even the ones that are the vocal minority. We enjoy talking to them, whether it's through the forums or at BlizzCon. We're gamers, and we love talking to gamers."



"I put the eye-drops in twice a day, but they still glow like that."



Draenei: like Klingons except blue.





Goblins haven't been this cool since *Labyrinth*.

## CON ARTISTS

Dabiri was one of the main men behind the BlizzCon – and slightly underestimated its popularity. "When we finished *World of Warcraft*, we wanted to do some sort of fan appreciation convention where we could bring the developers together with the fans and have some fun. Early on we thought, since it is our first time we've had a game convention like this let's start small. I was actually one of the proponents of doing so. I told everyone, 'maybe we should start with like 1,000 or 2,000 people and then we will grow since we've never done anything like this.' Well, I was out-voted, and like everything we do at Blizzard it's like go big or go home."

The first BlizzCon in 2005 had over 8,000 attendees. In 2009, there were 20,000 and a new ticket process due to the stupidly high demand for them in 2008.

❏ "The *Warcraft* series is really near and dear to our hearts. There are always things that we're looking at, possibilities for it, ideas that we have. Other than the RTS series and our MMO, we're looking for opportunities down the road.

"And I know in the past we've made announcements that we are going to do

an adventure game. Though that got cancelled, that doesn't mean we won't do anything else with the series. We love the *Warcraft* universe."

Last year, however, Blizzard changed as a company after a merger, becoming Activision Blizzard. Dabiri, however, insists nothing has altered.

While Blizzard and *WOW*'s success screams careful planning and strategy, Dabiri claims otherwise.

"Back before *WOW* came out, there were a lot of companies questioning whether MMOs were going to be lucrative or not. I remember at GDC 2002 some developers saying 'Oh, this'll never work – this'll never happen,' in reaction to *EverQuest* and *Ultima Online*.

"Several companies tried but gave up on the industry – but when *WOW* came out, all you saw were developers trying to make MMOs. I think there's a market for them and we've kind of

"If anything, it's just given us a wider audience to work with. From the Activision side, you have a lot of players and their games – the *Guitar Heroes* and the *Call of Duties*. People worry that when you get bought by another company they'll change the way you work. It's happened to Blizzard before, and every time the business people on the other end have known better – you don't touch something that's working."

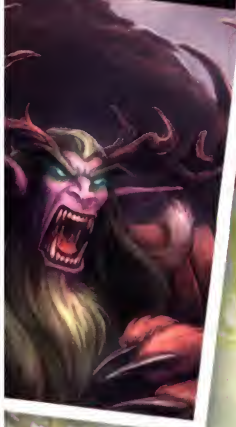


Take away their buckets for buffs.

# "The *Warcraft* series is near to our hearts"



"Do you think the antlers are a bit much?"



## THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY

Where the industry is going – and how Blizzard wishes they would

"There are a lot of people that try to emulate *World of Warcraft* – and as flattering as that is our end it's definitely not the right move.

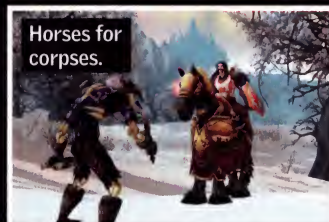
"I know that *World of Warcraft* is very successful, and so people think if they were to make another game just like it they could somehow capture that audience. However, I don't think that's what players are looking for. Players that have invested time in *WOW* don't just want to do the same thing in other game – they want to try something completely new and different.

"I think the industry needs to move in that direction to come up with some innovative new MMOs that are trying really different things. Take *City of Heroes* – at least that's something that's not a fantasy game."



Bespin? Is that you?

Horses for corpses.



"I love you this much."



What is this, why is this man so angry?



And now, some sort of cow thing.



grown that base and I do think that there is a future for them."

Well, Blizzard must have done something different, as five years and two expansions in, *World of Warcraft* has passed the 11 million subscription mark. "You know, back in 2004 we didn't plan to say by 2009 we'll have 11 million subscribers. There was no way in a million years that we would have thought that we would be as successful as we are today.

We just decided to – like in all of our games – make something epic and fun.

"We've shown that you can do something amazing given the right talent, and the right time, and the right type of design. The timing was right, too: you see a lot of people going online now, more so than they did back in 2001, or even 2004. People communicate more online, they tweet, they Facebook – they're more social. Players are more connected and games like *World of Warcraft* actually cater themselves to these people."

### EVER ONWARDS

As far as *World of Warcraft*'s success, though, Dabiri couldn't tell you how long it's going to last.

"There are a lot of things that we did to make it this far. But I don't think we did them because we thought they would get 11 million customers. We did them because we thought those of things that make it fun for us. And at the end of the day we are probably our first customers.

"Everything that we thought about MMOs has been kind of broken by *World of Warcraft*. We don't have anything to look at as a basis for a game that lasted this long. Even if you look at some of those older ones like the *EQs* and *UOs* – these games still out there 10 years later. All we're going to do is continue to add value to our customers and make sure that the game is the best that it can be for as long as we can." **PCZ**

Blood Elves are super-hot cartoon ladies.





**C**HRISTMAS IS COMING and the geese are getting fat. Plus we've been trawling the shops and the internet to find you some presents to add to your wish list or buy for your gaming chums. Plus we're giving away the lot (more or less) to one lucky winner (see page 38 for more).

# 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

Here's what you should be asking Santa for this year



## 1. GEFORCE 3D VISION KIT

**COMPANY** NVIDIA **PRICE** £360  
**WHERE TO BUY** scan.co.uk

We've seen the future and it's 3D. As you'll have read in last month's issue, videogames are leading the 3D tech revolution and NVIDIA's kit is the first decent stereoscopic 3D gaming kit to get on shelves. It combines wireless GeForce 3D Vision Glasses and software, but you'll need a 3D compatible screen (a 120Hz monitor will be fine). 3D games currently available include *Batman: Arkham Asylum* and *Need For Speed: Shift*, both of which have to be seen to be believed.

## 2. PC ZONE SUBSCRIPTION

**COMPANY** PC ZONE  
**PRICE** £50.62 **WHERE TO BUY** myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

Obviously the only PC games magazine you need, but why pay full price for your issue every week? For a limited period, we're offering some excellent deals on Christmas subscriptions online, where you can save up to 35% on the cover price – that's a quarterly Direct Debit of just £12.65 for 13 issues a year!



## 3. THE POWERBALL SIGNATURE

**COMPANY** RPM Sports  
**PRICE** £26.99  
**WHERE TO BUY** powerballs.com/shop

RPM Sports have invented the Powerball, a gadget designed for build strength in wrists, forearms and shoulders to help with RSI and carpal tunnel conditions, or just for fun. The Signature edition comes with a sapphire white light neon rotor which, as you hold it, spins and accelerates until it reaches 16,000rpm, when it exerts over 40lbs of pressure on your limbs – impressive seeing as it weighs under 300g. An built-in computer on the outer shell controls how fast to operate the ball and archives data like your highest achieved spinning speed.





#### 4. MIONIX SAIPH 3200 MOUSE AND ALIOTH MAT

**COMPANY** Mionix  
**PRICE** £54.99/£16.99  
**WHERE TO BUY** scan.co.uk  
Scoring 87% in issue 212 we said the Saiph 3200 covers the two core gaming needs: precision and handling. It boasts a 3200dpi sensor and buttons for altering sensitivity in-game, and other mice feel unwieldy in comparison. The Saiph 3200 has five programmable buttons and is topped off with a gold-plated USB plug. Why not buy the Alioth mat to match? It's smooth on top, with extra grip on the bottom and is just 3mm thick.

#### 5. VISION RACER

**COMPANY** Vision Racer **PRICE** £599 (until 22 Dec, then £649) **WHERE TO BUY** uk.visionracer.com/uk  
A pricey gift, but the Vision Racer really brings racing games to life, so if you want that authentic feel, look no further. It comes with a polished stainless steel driving simulator chassis system combined with leading electronics. It retails in a variety of packages starting at £599 (until December 22). If you want to give these a test drive then head down to HMV Gamerbase in Glasgow, Reading, Manchester or London. The Holy Grail when it comes to gaming chairs? Well, we think so.

#### 6. MINI GORILLA

**COMPANY** Powertraveller  
**PRICE** £99.95 **WHERE TO BUY** powertraveller.com  
For the person who has everything, this gadget allows you to power everything! This will keep you safe from battery meltdown, charging pretty much everything from iPods to netbooks. For netbooks, it will provide up to six hours of extra power and it also powers e-readers, digital cameras, iPhones, mobiles, and most 5V devices, as it comes with 20 interchangeable tips. At just 150x83x14mm and 265g and it's a handy size to pack in any luggage. Plus there's one button to press to pick the correct voltage for each device. Simple.

### MOVIE PICKS

SFX editor Dave Bradley recommends the top five DVDs of 2009.



#### STAR TREK

★★★★★  
"With the Enterprise's rightful captain back in his chair, it looks like *Star Trek's* odd-number hoodoo has been consigned to history. *Trek 2.0* is all set to live long and prosper."

#### MOON

★★★★★  
"The indie SF movie is practically a contradiction in terms. *Moon* proves it can be done, and that the results can look slick. It's an eerie, often moving meditation on the nature of identity."



#### TRUE BLOOD - SEASON ONE

★★★★★  
"If you watched HBO's hit vampire series with your granny it would probably give her

a coronary. The sex scenes stack up with such frequency it's a wonder your screen doesn't steam up."

#### BATTLESTAR GALACTICA THE COMPLETE SERIES - ULTIMATE EDITION

★★★★★  
"You have to admire the way this heavyweight show fought the corner for genre television. Sophisticated, compelling and original? So say we all."

#### TORCHWOOD: CHILDREN OF EARTH

★★★★★  
"The darkness is pushed up to 11, chillingly showing how inhumane we can become when pushed into a corner. By any sane criteria this five-part story is a triumph."





## GAMING PICKS

PC ZONE editor, Ali Wood recommends the top five games of 2009.



### EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR

★★★★★

"How could we not recommend the highest rating game of the year? It's accessible, deep, fun and serious, all at the same time."

### OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING

★★★★★

"A world-exclusive review of a game that proved it was a military simulator that remembers the real reason people play games: because they're fun."



### DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

★★★★★

"This was one of the best games we've played this year and secured BioWare's position as masters of the RPG genre. You can have sex with dwarves too, which is nice."

### FOOTBALL MANAGER 2010

★★★★★

"Christmas wouldn't be complete without a game of footie on Boxing Day and, despite vast improvements to rival *Champ Man*, this is still the best football management game."



### BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

★★★★★

"Having to wait months for the PC version did little to dampen our joy when playing the game, concluding it's a damn fine game you really should play."



8



7

### 7. LOGITECH Z-5500

DIGITAL 5.1 SURROUND SOUND SPEAKERS AND G35 SURROUND SOUND HEADSET

COMPANY Logitech

PRICE £349.99/£129.99

WHERE TO BUY play.com

Logitech have expanded their remit to include speakers in recent years. The Z-5500 digital speakers keep the standards high too, coming with Dolby Digital 5.1 'theatre-quality' sound. Add to this the G35 headset, that delivers 7.1 Dolby surround sound and you've got one slick setup. Not only do they come with three headband pads, there are three customisable G keys, on-ear audio controls, and an adjustable noise-cancelling microphone.

### 8. JOYSTICK JUNKIES T-SHIRTS

COMPANY Joystick Junkies

PRICE £24.99-£29.99

WHERE TO BUY joystickjunkies.com

Joystick Junkies do some great games and technology inspired gear and these three T-shirts are just a selection of the sort of stuff you can expect from them. The ethos behind the designs is from the styles from the '70s and the bold colours from the '80s. These are the kind of T-shirts you see someone wearing and wonder where they're from. Without being too obvious you can pledge your allegiance to videogames without having to shout too loudly.



9

### 9. FLASH VOYAGER 32GB USB

COMPANY Corsair PRICE £59.99

WHERE TO BUY tekheads.co.uk

You need a good USB stick, but the Flash Voyager goes the extra mile as its rubberised exterior makes it more durable than other flash drives. It's also resilient to liquids, and has proved its toughness by being run over in SUVs, thrown out of windows, boiled, and put through a washing machine cycle and coming out working. The 32GB capacity can store 10,000 6MP JPEG images, 13 hours of MPEG2 video, or 8,000 128kps MP3s.





## 10. ADOPT AN ORANG-UTAN

**COMPANY** WWF **PRICE** £3/month  
**WHERE TO BUY** [snipurl.com/orangs](http://snipurl.com/orangs)  
We couldn't do a gift guide without a token charity entry and as we love monkeys, what better than a gift than to adopt an orang-utan? You can pay from as little as £3 a month and you get a cuddly orang-utan in your adoption pack as well as a fact booklet, an orang-utan print, a greetings card, and three issues of *Insight* magazine per year. Your donation will go towards protecting and restoring the orang-utan's habitat, and helping illegal hunting and poaching.

## 11. CHRONOS IDOCK SERIES II

**COMPANY** PURE **PRICE** £99.99  
**WHERE TO BUY** [pure.com](http://pure.com)

According to PURE this is a world's first. A DAB bedside radio providing all the features you'd expect from a clock radio, also docks and charges iPods and iPhones. You can listen to your music on it and the display lets you know what track you're listening to, plus you can control your iPod/Phone using the radio or remote control. Buttons have also been super-sized for when you're bleary eyed and can't quite see, and there's a PowerPort for connecting USB accessories. But the real selling point here is the DAB functionality. Waking up to the radio in the morning is all well and good, but unless you have a super-sharp aerial, white noise is the last thing you want to hear when you open your peepers.

## 12. AION COLLECTOR'S EDITION

**COMPANY** NCsoft **PRICE** £59.99  
**WHERE TO BUY** [play.com](http://play.com)

The limited *Collector's Edition* of *Aion* (PCZ 214, 80%) is something special. It comes with an 16.5cm hand-painted figurine of Aiva, a female winged Asmodian Daeva. There are also several exclusive in-game items, including the Black Cloud Wings, to enhance flight time, the Black Cloud Earring, which boosts health and mana while playing, and an exclusive title that enhances an avatar's abilities. Other in-game items include two exclusive character animations, as well as a special dye to customise your avatars' equipment. Opening the box uncovers two dual-sided maps of Elysea and Asmodae, the home regions of the two player races. The *Collector's Edition* box also includes the official soundtrack by composer Yang Bang-Ean.

## GADGET PICKS

These are the top gadgets T3 recommends buying this Christmas.



### SONY ERICSSON C905+

★★★★★

The C905 is superb in sunlight, while the xenon flash copes manfully indoors. Other features, include a built-in *BBC iPlayer*, also shine. The 8.1MP camera with xenon flash and face recognition is superb.

### SONY A350

★★★★★

Live View mode, quick, accurate shots, a tilting LCD screen and SteadyShot ensure A-grade results. This is capable of truly stunning photos and Live View mode makes framing easy.



### IPOD TOUCH 32GB

★★★★★

The "funnest" iPod ever just got more fun, with a hefty price drop. Add firmware 3.0 and it's unstoppable. Superb sound, video and interface and built-in wi-fi means it's a fine web browser.

### SONY BDV IT1000

★★★★★



With elegant standing speakers and a pair of wireless rear speakers, this Sony Blu-ray system looks high-end – and at £1,500 it has a price tag to match. The sound and picture quality impress too. A result all round, then... although there's no iPod dock or media streaming.

### SANYO XACTI VPC HD2000

★★★★★

Truly a top-notch camcorder, this shoots full-HD footage at 60fps and takes very fine, eight-meg stills. We love the quick-shooting and how user-friendly it is, although it's too big for most pockets!





PRIZES  
WORTH  
**£1,917.42**

# MASSIVE GIVEAWAY!

**HAVE WE GOT  
A VERY MERRY  
CHRISTMAS FOR  
YOU, WITH THIS  
YULE-TASTIC  
GIVEAWAY!**



**T**O CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS and the end of another year, we're giving away (nearly) everything featured in our *Christmas Gift Guide*. That means you readers can lay your hands on a total of £1,917 and 42 pence of FREE stuff! For a chance to win answer the question to your right.

## FIRST PRIZE

The overall winner will receive Samsung 22in 3D vision-compatible monitor, NVIDIA 3D Vision glasses kit, a copy of *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, and an MSI GeForce N260GTX-T2D896 graphics card worth over £600!

NVIDIA 3D Vision is the biggest thing PC gaming has seen for years. Active 3D glasses and a 120Hz screen deliver an immersive 3D experience with graphics you can practically reach out and touch at full resolution and full speed, with nothing taken away. You can play all upcoming games and over 400 of your old favourites in full 3D, and *Batman: Arkham Asylum* is the perfect title to get your revolution started!

## SECOND PRIZE

A Mionix Saiph 3200 Mouse and Alioth Mouse Mat, a Powerball Signature, Corsair 32GB Flash Voyager USB, Mini Gorilla netbook charger, your pick of a Joystick Junkies T-shirt, *Aion Collector's Edition*, Logitech Z-5500 Digital 5.1 Surround Sound Speakers, a Chronos iDock Series II, and a year's subscription to *PC ZONE*.

## RUNNERS-UP PRIZE

Four people will get a copy of *Aion Collector's Edition*, a Powerball Signature, and a Joystick Junkies T-shirt.

## HOW TO ENTER

### TEXT YOUR ANSWER TO 87474

Start your message PCZMASSIVE, then space, then enter A, B or C, then a space, then your name and email address

**Q** IN THE CHRISTMAS CAROL  
WHAT DID THE TRUE LOVE  
GIVE ON THE EIGHTH DAY?

- A. 8 LITTLE SISTERS**
- B. 8 HEADLESS CHICKENS**
- C. 8 MAIDS A-MILKING**



### TO ENTER ONLINE HEAD TO

[www.futurecomps.co.uk/pczmassive](http://www.futurecomps.co.uk/pczmassive) and follow the prompts.

By sending your entry you agree to these competition rules and you confirm you are happy to receive details of future offers and promotions from Future Publishing Limited and carefully selected third parties. If you do not want to receive information relating to future offers and promotions, please include the word STOP at the end of your text message. Texts will be charged at £1 plus your standard network tariff rate. Competition ends 22 December 2009, entries received after this date will not count. Standard competition and texting rules apply (see page 129). Joystick Junkie T-shirt winners may pick a T-shirt worth up to £25.





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SDMS**

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WET WET WET...

BIO SHOCK  
2

Steve Hogarty's dragged back beneath the waves. Big Daddy's home...

DEVELOPER 2K Marin PUBLISHER 2K Games  
WEBSITE bioshockgame.com

**T**HERE'S MORE THAN one Big Sister. For whatever reason, 2K Marin had been leading us to believe that the lithe nemesis of *BioShock 2* was a lonely thing.

Sure, she'd pull you through iron doors with psycho-kinetic powers, whirling you up into a violent cloud of debris before slamming you to the floor, but there was a sense that when she wasn't nearby, she'd be sitting alone and crying, trying to read a book but skewering it with her bayonet forearms.

But the Big Sister is, in fact, many. Now when we can't see them, there's

the fear that they might be throwing parties and talking about how shit we are. Terror is no longer tainted by pity, and so when you do encounter one of the skittish, wall-leaping assassins, you'll fear them completely. You'll also be able to win, which is partly the reason why the Big Sister became a sorority rather than a solo foe.

**WOMAN TROUBLE**

"As of last time we spoke," explains Jordan Thomas, creative director, "we were talking about a Big Sister who was at the centre of the fiction."

"There's still a character in whom the soul of that narrative still exists, but as *BioShock 2*'s narrative must exist in harmony with the gameplay, we decided to give the player that feeling of victory that comes from actually defeating this foe when she comes for you. So the Big Sisters are Sofia Lamb's, our new villain's, mightiest enforcers. Yet as you go through the game, you'll learn more and more about this character who is at the centre of that fiction."

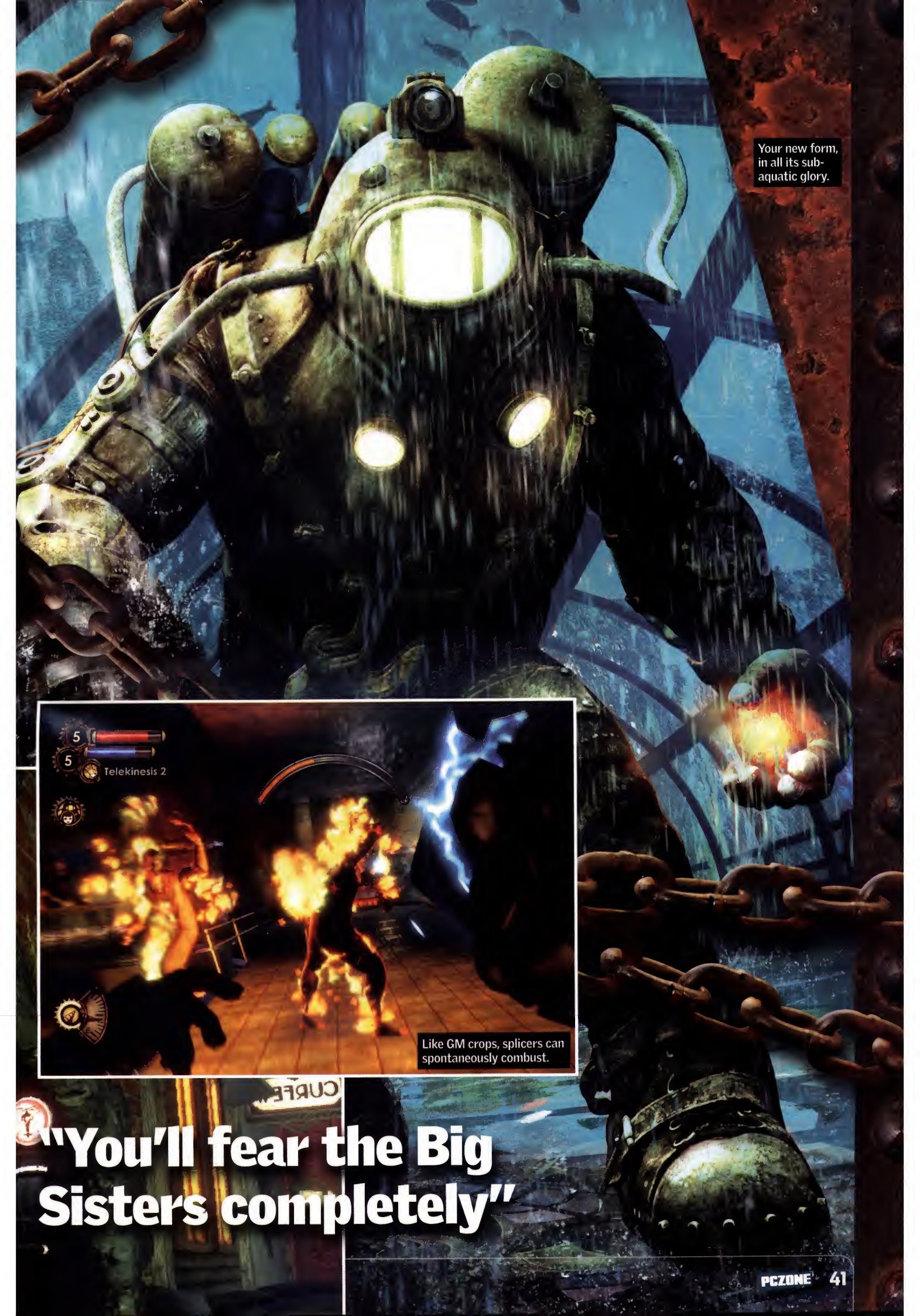


The Oil of Olay plasmid in full effect.

ETA  
9 FEB  
2010**THE LOWDOWN**

- ✓ It's more BioShock
- ✓ Exciting new locations
- ✓ Splicer sieges require actual strategy
- ✓ You've got a drill
- ✗ Too similar in theme?





Your new form,  
in all its sub-  
aquatic glory.



**"You'll fear the Big Sisters completely"**



The new Rumbler's can throw down turrets.

Winter Blast 2

16-0  
Rivet

Bathyspheres are out, and metro systems are in.

## "There's fun to be had exploring Ryan's distorted vision"

➤ Hopefully you're up to speed with the terminology of *BioShock*, or at least enough of it to not be fazed by talk of young children syringing pints of fluid from corpses before guzzling it down like sinewy Lucozade, because *BioShock 2* continues the fiction in a not at all dissimilar way. The opening part of the level we played shows just how little the actual format of the game's changed – your train journey is impeded by a door which has been frozen shut, a shifty sounding ally (Sinclair, a protégé to Andrew Ryan) tells you, via shortwave radio, that to proceed you must find the Incinerate plasmid, which is hidden deep inside a wonderfully constructed and detailed amusement park.

The amusement park's function in Rapture is revealed to you gradually through scattered audio diaries: when the children of Rapture began to ask

about the surface, Ryan decided to build this place – Ryan Amusements – to terrify them of the world above.

The park's centrepiece is the Journey To The Surface ride, an on-rails bathysphere trip through narrow wooden streets and cardboard shop fronts. Scenes of metaphors made real judder into motion as you pass: a menacing, giant animatronic hand tears the roof from a farmhouse to steal the farmer's invisible income, while Ryan's crackling voice echoes the same anti-Socialist, anti-tax agenda we heard during the opening scenes of *BioShock*.

Subtle as a wet fart in crematorium though all that may be, there's still fun to be had exploring Ryan's distorted vision of the world above the waves. Elsewhere in the park, animated dioramas cheerfully detail the history of Rapture, from Ryan's original

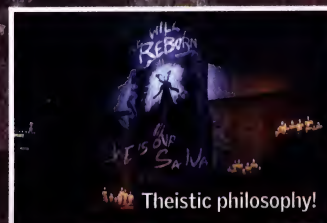
Dual-wielding taken to its logical extreme...



Brutes are splicers who've abused strength tonics.



"The nine-iron! I asked for the nine-iron!"



Theistic philosophy!



Stepped in a poodle...

expedition to the laying of the foundations. It's porn for the detail-perverts, and we love every ounce of it.

## PROTOTYPE

You're also a Big Daddy. Well, an early model of Big Daddy, and one not as mutated as those that went into full production. It makes little difference to how *BioShock 2* handles, and it's thankfully unlike the closing sections of the previous game. You're as nimble as you were suitless in *BioShock*, your diving apparatus doesn't enter your field of vision – the only immediately noticeable differences are in the stomping sounds you make, and your giant drill arm, which replaces the wrench as your melee tool of choice.

In fact, all of the weapons you wield are beefier than most of Jack's armoury. Your rivet gun not only fires, well, rivets, but it's also capable of laying down rivet traps on floors, walls and ceilings. If approached, these traps will fire rivets directly upwards, downwards or sideways through whatever unfortunate sack of organic matter that happens to get in the way.



Big Sis indulges in some night swimming.

Next, your spear gun catches splicers and lifts them off the floor, pinning them to whatever they hit next. Retrieve the spear and they fall back down. Use a rocket spear and the bolt will lodge itself in the splicer's flesh before sparking to life, launching the victim upwards or into a mad, screaming death spiral about the room. To end the show, it explodes. As you might guess, these rocket spears are as rare as hens' tits.

As a Big Daddy, your interaction with Little Sisters is more complex than just harvesting or saving them. You'll come across the girls in much the same way, with their clomping

protectors in tow as they flit about the abandoned hallways. A new Big Daddy type is shown, the can-faced Rumbler, who can throw down handfuls of mini-turrets.

"You didn't see it," claims Jordan, "but I could've frozen the Rumbler and hacked his turrets."

We believe him – the number of interactions between plasmids and the environment feels to have increased. You can fire an ice plasmid at a cyclone trap to turn it into a freezing wind, capable



## A LITTLE LAMB

That doesn't make the children laugh and play

So, if the Big Sister (none of them) isn't running the show, who is? Well, it's Sofia Lamb, a woman as driven and unhinged as the departed Ryan and Fontaine, but one with an opposing philosophy. Instead of believing that people should be judged by their merits, as Andrew Ryan did, she instead follows an altruistic path, believing that to become a truly enlightened society we must help those around us.

Exactly how a woman with this ideology made it to Rapture in the first place isn't immediately obvious (in fact, in an audio diary we hear Andrew Ryan cursing himself for ever having overlooked her views), but in the power vacuum following the close of *BioShock* she found opportunity to turn Rapture to her own nefarious ends. (Ends, as you know, are usually nefarious.)

In her audio diaries she talks of Eleanor, a gifted child of Fontaine's orphanage (a front to attract children to be implanted with sea slugs to turn them into Little Sisters). Meanwhile Jordan Thomas, creative director, claims that while there are many Big Sisters, there's one in particular who's key to *BioShock 2*'s plot. On top of this, what drives your own character is a desire to find your own Little Sister – the one you were specifically bonded to – somewhere in Rapture.

Please feel free to guess *BioShock 2*'s twist months before the game's release. We're hoping, however, that it's not as simple as that.



Disgruntled customer + big guns = bad news for the staff.



## ONLINE SCRAPPING

Everything's got to have multiplayer now. That's the rule. Games, toasters, kettles, this fork. If they're not riddled with online game modes and their own peculiar take on Capture the Flag, they're hardly worth rolling out of bed for. *BioShock 2*'s multiplayer was met with some interest though, with Digital Extremes placing the underwater deathmatches during Rapture's civil war, which set the scene for the events of *BioShock*.

Regular every-man-for-himself scraps are included of course, with players arming themselves with two plasmids and two weapons, as well as attribute-altering tonics to increase speed, defence, accuracy and the like. Something we particularly enjoyed was the Capture the Sister game mode, a CTF-affair between two groups of Splicers, one Big Daddy, and a Little Sister NPC.

Splicers must distract or disable the Big Daddy player in order to kidnap the Sister and return her to a vent, though once holding a Sister, players cannot use weapons. Tactics arise from this – one player might choose speed tonics and a teleportation plasmid (similar to the one used by Houdini splicers of the first game) and then be defended by teammates as they make their dash for the vent.

Largest skirt of any multiplayer game?

Electro Bolt

The *Windows Media Player* visualisations plasmid, obviously.





The Rumbler's turrets can be turned against him.

## "There's scope for ingenuity when up against Big Daddies"

Upgrade your Electrobolt plasmid to do, well, this.

4 Electro Bolt



Press [X] to use a FIRST AID KIT

5-4 Heavy Rifle

of turning splicers into flying blocks of ice. Likewise, the Incinerate plasmid will turn a cyclone trap into a blazing tornado. And you can electrocute a flying turret to short circuit it. Do this and it'll fall, and if it lands in water it'll zap anyone unlucky enough to be sharing the puddle. As with the first game, there's scope for ingenuity when coming up against Big Daddies, and the world encourages it in its placement of broken water pipes and security cameras.

### GIRL TROUBLE

As soon as you've carved a path to a Little Sister, your binary choice is

now between harvesting and adopting her. Adopt, and she hops on your shoulder and guides you to a corpse with magical pheromone-o-vision, a glittering trail of sparkles leading you to a pre-determined body.

According to Jordan, only certain splicer remains are fit to have ADAM sucked out of their torsos, and these corpses are likely to be ones 2K Marin have chosen for us. Ones that sit in well-lit rooms surrounded by enough doors and entry-points to make the inevitable siege unpredictable.

They'll also, based on the two occasions in which we found ourselves chaperoning the macabre event, be

Photograph dead players for damage bonuses against them.

7:32

(1st) danomic15  
(3rd) TwoKJer



flanked by security cameras or turrets, both of which can be hacked to turn the arena to your advantage.

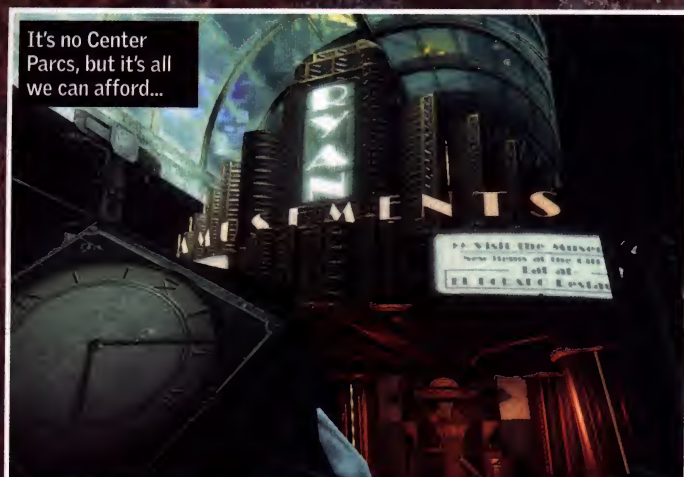
Hacking's changed too. Instead of the polarising mini-games of the first *BioShock*, in which you'd be faced with an impromptu game of *Pipe Mania* before being allowed to open a door or

crack a safe, you're now presented with a multicoloured bar along which an arrow slides.

Stop it in the green and your hacking attempt is a success, stop it in the blue and your aim is true – you'll MacGuyver the turret into being even more effective than usual.



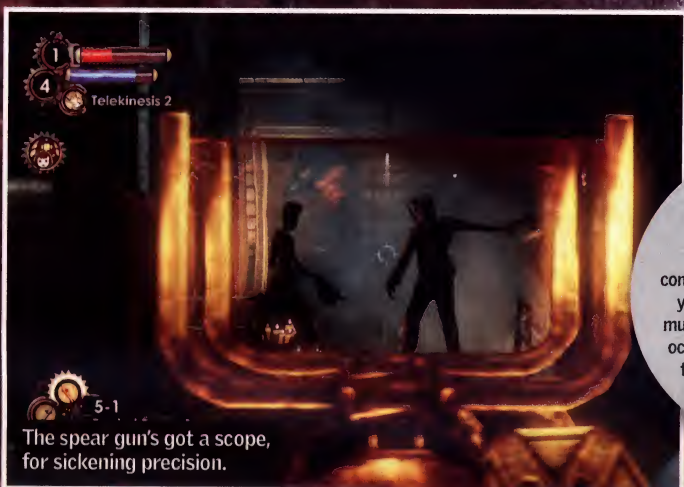




It's no Center  
Parcs, but it's all  
we can afford...



Those New Year's  
masks have held  
out well...



The spear gun's got a scope,  
for sickening precision.

Of course, miss both of these colours and not only are you really bad at a simple reaction-based game, but you fail the hack attempt. Crucially, regardless of whether you fail or succeed, the world no longer grinds to a standstill while you fiddle with objects – this explains why *Pipe Mania's* been replaced by this rudimentary mini-game – turrets will still tear away at you while you're fingering their access panels, and security cameras will gleefully send teams of robots after you while you poke at their innards.

To this end we now have Remote Hacking Darts, which do exactly what you're imagining them to. That you have to collect and ration these darts turns hacking into a commodity rather than a pure skill, and ties the stealth approach to moving through Rapture more closely to the action approach.

Whereas hacking in *BioShock* – those times you ran through hails of gunfire to reach the safety of your frozen *Pipe Mania* limbo – felt entirely like cheating, it instead feels like true ingenuity and resourcefulness in *BioShock 2*.

Just as we prepared for Big Daddy encounters in the first game, we prepare

for splicer sieges in the second. As soon as you set down your Little Sister to allow her to harvest a corpse, the deranged residents of Rapture flood into the room to... well, we're not entirely sure what their intentions actually are. They're certainly angry, and as our rivet traps, now-allied turrets and cyclone plasmids roar into life, the room is the scene of the most frenetic combat Rapture's yet seen. Your preparations falter soon enough and you're left protecting your Sister with reliable plasmids and guns. And drills.

This is where dual wielding begins to pull its weight. Your role as a Big Daddy might not imbue you with any immediate sense of physical superiority over Jack – but the ability to wield a plasmid in one hand and a weapon in the other allows for far more fluid combat with splicers, and at a faster pace too. A paralysing electrobolt followed by a torso-mangling thrust of your drill replaces a similar, wrench-based manoeuvre from the first game, while the benefits of being able to shred a screaming housewife with Gatling gun rounds

## THIS IS YOU

Meet the first ever Big Daddy

### GIVE 'EM HELMET

You've still got a diving helmet, naturally, and it comes in especially handy when you enter flooded rooms, or must explore the surface of the ocean. Out there you'll be able to find the ADAM-bearing sea slugs that ruined everything.

### OL' LEFTY

You'll now be able to dual-wield plasmids and guns, making fights against splicers faster and more frenetic. Plasmids are also upgradeable. The Incinerate plasmid can be bolstered to the point of becoming a splicer-frying flamethrower.

### BLACK & DECKER

Your drill is upgradeable and can be swapped out for other weapons. Lubricating nozzles will reduce friction and improve fuel efficiency, while a diamond-tip will make your bit more effective against armoured enemies.

### BIGFOOT

You're just as quick as you were in *BioShock*, but as a Big Daddy you'll be able to perform a ground-shaking foot-pound to disorientate enemies. This also has the added effect of knocking any Houdini splicers out of their invisible state – useful in multiplayer games.



Big Daddy suits can be picked up in some deathmatches.

## "Your stature as a Big Daddy seems to have been neutered"

while simultaneously grilling her with your upgraded Incinerate plasmid are obvious.

This is where *BioShock 2* truly makes you feel powerful. A good thing too, as elsewhere, your stature as a Big Daddy – the toughest enemies from the first game – seems to have been neutered at every turn. Splicers are more powerful, as Jordan explains.

"The balance of the city 10 years on is much more feral and unforgiving than the first game," he warns us. "The splicers you encounter have been augmenting themselves for years and years – and those who've managed to survive since *BioShock* are truly post-human. They're able to take on a Big Daddy with ease. So you're really fighting for survival."



Brutes are one of these new breeds of splicer, Mafia goon-types with broken fedoras who've been caning the strength tonics in the decade between games. They're walking tanks – not a million miles from *Left 4 Dead's* Tank in terms of aesthetics – and they'll take a fair few smacks before they give it up.

### EXPECT WIBBLES

"The Vita-Chambers," continues Jordan, explaining the various ways this new Rapture intends to punish you, "if you die during a fight with a Big Daddy, you'll come back to find the Little Sister has healed him. So you can't just whittle them to death in the way that you once did."

A strange balance has been met then. You're now in the clomping, commanding iron boots of a genetically advanced, physically-superior super-mutant, but your stomping grounds are populated by enemies more powerful than ever before.

The net total of all this line-shifting is a game that feels severely similar to *BioShock* in its play style, visual style,

format, plot and pace, and that's something that should cause furrowed brows and much concerned wibbling among those who were expecting more of a departure from the brass-and-glass underwater kingdom.

Concerned wibbles aside, it's the setting that will ultimately impress, and the opportunity to return to one of gaming's most original locations in order to rummage around bits of the city that went curiously unnoticed in the first game. Ryan Amusements alone is testament to the sort of quality set-piece locations 2K Marin are capable of conjuring up, dark and twisted insights into the unhinged brainwongs of Andrew Ryan, and places as unsettling as anything you could care to dig out of old Rapture.

That's just the tip of this maddening iceberg too, the real thrill will be in uncovering the crackpots, the Sander Cohens, of this new world. And having had 10 years to properly marinate in their own lunacy, surrounded by naught but sea and splicers, they're sure to be properly cuckoo. **PCZ**





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# PCZONE Reviews

Our verdict on the  
latest PC games

## MY HOUSE

**W**ELCOME TO THE reviews section, where I live. That nest of leaves and moss between the *Modern Warfare 2* and *Left 4 Dead 2* reviews is where I sleep. I suck on a patch of moisture near the *Torchlight* review in the mornings to remain hydrated, and the rusted shield that is *Painkiller: Resurrection*'s Dump Award gives me shade during the scorching days, and shelter during the freezing nights.

I cannot leave this place, as my life force is inextricably linked to a middling review of *Order of War*. If I were to step foot in the Upfront section I would age suddenly and die like the bad guy from *The Last Crusade*. But I have a solution. I paste a review of *Cricket Revolution* to the sole of my left foot, and *FIFA Manager* to my right, allowing me to visit people like 2K Marin and see games like *BioShock 2* without fear of crumbling into a fine grey powder.

Was it worth it? Ask pages 40 to 47. Otherwise, come on into my filthy reviews den. And mind the pile of poo.

*Steve Hogarty*

**Steve Hogarty**  
Deputy editor

## MUST BUYS!



PC ZONE Classics are hard to come by, and when you see one you should drop to the floor and refuse to move until someone buys you the game...



Fallout 3   Left 4 Dead   Empire: Total War

52

# MODERN WARFARE 2

You've read about it. Now find out if  
Infinity Ward have delivered a classic.

## THE PC ZONE BADGES



### CLASSIC (90%+)

Games scoring in this bracket are air-punching, heart-soaring triumphs. Buy them.



### RECOMMENDED (75-89%)

Head-turning, if not eye-popping, games. But then, who wants their eyes popped?



### DUMP (0-19%)

PC ZONE's dirty protest. If a game is bad, we won't shirk our duty.



### ONLINE ONLY

Don't have an internet connection? Then you're wasting your time with this game.



### EXPANSION PACK

See this and you're going to have to get the original to play the expansion. We know - life's not fair.



### ON THE DVD

Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo or movie.

## THE PC ZONE GAMING MACHINE

As you'll see on the many pages of resplendent reviews that follow, we list the minimum specifications you need to play each game in each review. Please refer to the publisher's website to check out their recommended optimum specs that'll make the games super-whizzy. We review all new games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Xworks X81-C2D, (pictured right). For more info on Xworks, tap into the wonder that is the internet and type the following selection of letters into your browser: [xworksinteractive.com](http://xworksinteractive.com).



## ALSO REVIEWED

- 58 LEFT 4 DEAD 2**  
The Infected have come to New Orleans. But is this enough of a sequel to silence Valve's critics?
- 64 BORDERLANDS**  
Have 2K Games brought something new to post-apocalyptic shooters, besides billions of guns?
- 68 COLIN MCRÆ: DIRT 2**  
Will this rally racer have too much arcade and not enough sim?
- 72 RACE ON**
- 74 PAINKILLER: RESURRECTION**
- 75 NBA 2K10**
- 76 ORDER OF WAR**
- 77 THE SIMS 3:**  
WORLD ADVENTURES
- 78 MAJESTY 2**
- 79 FIFA MANAGER 10**
- 80 CRICKET REVOLUTION**
- 81 TORCHLIGHT**  
MACHINARIUM
- 82 TALES OF MONKEY ISLAND:**  
EPISODES 3 & 4
- 84 STATE OF PLAY: ULTIMA ONLINE**
- 86 BUDGET**
- 88 BUYER'S GUIDE**

# PCZONE SWEARS...

- ✓ To only review code signed off by the publishers and the developers
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- ✓ To hang up on companies who say that 79% isn't a good score. What do they know?
- ✓ To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk)



# CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 2

*Steve Hill* answers the call,  
which makes a change...

DEVELOPER Infinity Ward  
PUBLISHER Activision  
WEBSITE [modernwarfare2.com](http://modernwarfare2.com)  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £34.99

## AT A GLANCE...

The highly anticipated sequel arrives and proves to be a Hollywood-style high-adrenaline approach to war.

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:**  
Pentium 4 3.2GHz or AMD Athlon 64 3200+, 1GB RAM, and a 256MB GeForce 6600GT/Radeon 1600XT or better graphics card. Copy protection requires an internet connection.

### HOW IT STACKS

CALL OF DUTY:  
MODERN WARFARE 2 94%

OPERATION FLASHPOINT:  
DRAGON RISING 90%

CALL OF DUTY:  
MODERN WARFARE 89%

**T**HE EARLY 21ST Century is a conflicted time to live. On the day that the bodies of six British soldiers were flown home from Afghanistan the biggest entertainment launch of the year/decade/millennium took place in the shape of a videogame set loosely around the Afghanistan conflict.

Afforded the full blockbuster premiere treatment, *Modern Warfare 2*'s launch party was a surreal affair consisting of staff in military fatigues mixing cocktails and handing out trays

of brownies. Following a midnight set from Dizzee Rascal, the game was given out. The free bar was closed an hour before schedule as the place immediately emptied. Journalists turning down free drinks in favour of a game? That's seismic.

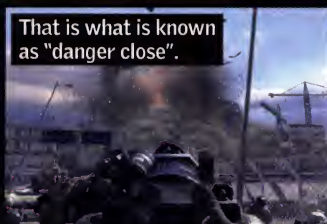
Not as seismic as what will probably be referred to indefinitely as "That Level". This is, of course, the now notorious fourth level of the game, a morally reprehensible atrocity exhibition that marks a watershed for gaming from which there may be no return. Now I'm a big horrible ugly man who has seen many disturbing things, yet the first time I encountered the No Russian level

is still seared into my brain, even in its befuddled post-party 4am state. In terms of incongruity it's a bit like watching a *Carry On* film only for Sid James to whip out his tumescent phallus 10 minutes in.

Here's how it pans out. The game begins in obligatory newbie friendly mode at a boot camp in

Afghanistan as you take control of new recruit Joseph Allen. It's literally a shooting gallery, teaching you the basics of wielding a weapon on the pretence of showing some locals the ropes. You're then sent to something called The Pit, a test of your skills that yields a recommended difficulty level.

That is what is known  
as "danger close".



**"It's instantly gripping, a textbook assault on the senses"**





This is where it all begins: target practice 101.



Sgt. Foley: No offense, but I gave a lot of you guys firing from the hip and spraying bullets all over the target.

On the way there, you are given an opportunity to drink in the detail, and it's a wondrous thing. A rudimentary game of basketball is taking place, some recruits are repairing a Humvee, and a fat bloke sits on his arse shoving a chocolate bar into his gaping maw.

Having passed the test with flying colours, it's then onto the conflict

proper, with an urban level that may have been lifted directly from the HBO series *Generation Kill*. A variety of weapons are called for, you get to ride in a vehicle, and make your first kill blood as you acquaint yourself with the intensity that marked the groundbreaking prequel. It's instantly gripping, a textbook assault on the

senses that leaves you reeling and hungry for more. Of course there are numerous casualties, but this is war, and it's a case of kill or be killed.

The next level is a slight change of pace, the much-demoed Cliffhanger level, where you play Gary 'Roach' Sanderson under the tutelage of *Call of Duty 4* star SAS Captain 'Soap' McTavish. A big hairy beast of a man, Soap makes Bear Grylls look like Graham Norton, and you will learn to love him. He's a bulletproof presence who'll lead you through the conflict,



You start in a living, breathing camp.

Looking down the barrel.



barking orders at you in a terse Scottish burr. He saves your life a number of times, and even if you know what's coming it's still tense stuff, culminating in a sequence that could easily precede the titles of a Bond film. The Ski-Doo chase perhaps isn't the thrill ride hinted at, and you naturally get to the escape helicopter with seconds to spare, and move on to the next level.

At this point you're warned that what follows is disturbing and asked again if you want to play it, with the guarantee that it won't affect your progress in the





Spot the sniper.

## A BIT SPECIAL

At the end of *Call of Duty 4*, once the credits had rolled, you suddenly found yourself on an aeroplane charged with the task of rescuing an anonymous VIP.

With no backstory to speak of, you basically had to lay waste to some terrorists, rescue the hostage and get the hell out of there, in this case by leaping out of the door to an unspecified conclusion. A smash-and-grab affair, that mini-level was essentially the inspiration for *Modern Warfare 2*'s all-new Spec Ops mode.

Again with no real narrative, these are a series of short levels culled from the main campaign with an arcade-y approach featuring high scores, time bonuses and so on. The levels progressively unlock, and can all be played solo, or if you fancy some company, in two-player co-op mode.

game. In other words, it's entirely gratuitous. And then you're asked if you're sure you want to play it.

Of course you want to play it, you've paid for the game and you're an adult. Clicking yes, it's explained that you – Joseph Allen – are going undercover with a terrorist group led by the game's main villain. The screen goes blank and you hear what sounds like something being unzipped. You're not in a Gents toilet, but in a lift, which comes to a halt to reveal a packed Russian airport. You and your faux-comrades step out, each wielding automatic weapons.

A security guard shows some concern, at which point the terrorists emotionlessly open fire, mowing down hordes of civilians who crumple to the ground in a screaming bloody mess, as an entire check-in queue is decimated. No detail is spared: the injured crawl for safety leaving trails of blood, only to be mercilessly put to death.

At this point you can't run, making the methodical slowness of the death walk that makes it so affecting, the inexorable extermination of wave after wave of innocent people. You're of course expected to join in with the bloodbath, but morally it's not easy to get involved. It's perhaps a validation of the power of the medium that you genuinely feel sullied by it.

## FANNING FLAMES

Not wishing to blow my cover, I wandered into a bookshop and took out some paperbacks. I also shot some tills, which spat out money, and lit up some hand luggage, which impressively spilled its contents on to the blood-soaked floor. You can't shirk from the slaughter entirely, as the police are called, and in order to finish the level you will have to murder them.

The whole thing leaves an unpleasant taste, and you have to question Infinity Ward's motives in including that level, other than to garner publicity and giving pundits a

further opportunity to demonise gaming. If they claim that it was to advance the story and establish the villain of the piece, then the whole incident could have been explained in a cutscene or a voiceover.

And anyway, what story? The Rizla-thin plot seems to consist of four blokes called things like Meat, Ghost and Jet going to an exotic location and finding a bloke who knows the whereabouts of another bloke in another continent. This is warfare as travelogue, with a trail of dead that spans the globe and back. Twice. For instance, with the dirty business of the airport massacre out of the way, you're off to Brazil, hunting some bloke through the favelas of Rio in the shadow of Christ the Redeemer.

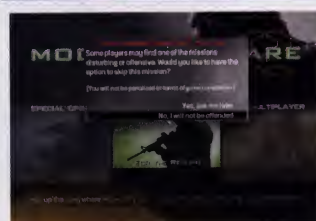
This is one of the trickier levels, as it's hard to get your bearings due to the fact that

Shoot that dog!

He's decidedly better-equipped than a real British soldier.

## BAN THIS SICK FILTH

Are you sure you want to read this?



### THE GET OUT CLAUSE

*Modern Warfare 2* comes with a self-censorship system regarding the *Daily Mail*-baiting airport level.



### THE DOUBLE-CHECK

You're asked again prior to the level, but in all honesty who's going to be able to resist at least a little peak?



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New gadgets include this handy heartbeat sensor.



**"You have to question IW's motives in including that level"**

Welcome to  
Rio De Janeiro.



That's the kind of chat you can expect throughout the game.



#### THE TRIPLE-CHECK

This is what you want; this is what you get. Your curiosity will inevitably get the better of you, but be warned, it is very disturbing.



#### A BLOOD-DIMMED TIDE...

Five blokes walk into an airport armed with automatics. You're pretending to be a terrorist. This can't possibly end well.



#### ...IS LOOSE

They casually open fire on a queue of passengers, sparking what will probably go down as gaming's most notorious scene.



#### DEATH OF INNOCENTS

It's an absolute bloodbath, and you're powerless to stop it. Unless, of course, you skip the level.



## ARE YOU BEING SERVED?

When it was announced that *Modern Warfare 2* wouldn't have dedicated servers, the internet went into meltdown, with an online petition ironically yielding more votes than an anti-war one.

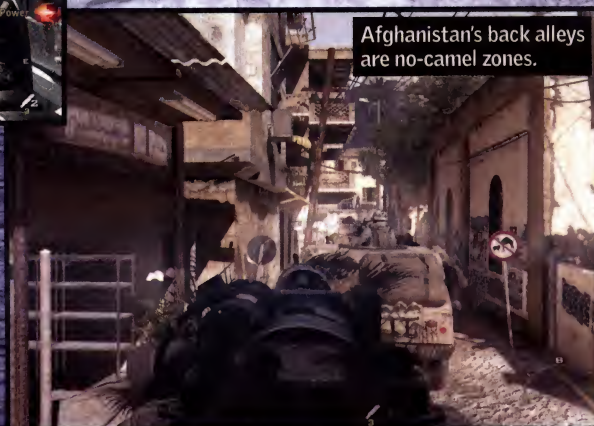
Despite this, Infinity Ward stuck to their guns, and although it's obviously early doors, thus far we have had no major problems. Finding games has proven almost instantaneous, with solid matchmaking and manageable pings. Also, the whole thing is linked to *Steam*, enabling you to invite your friends to play. Unfortunately, because we got *MW2* about 24 hours before this issue went to print, we were unable to thoroughly test the multiplayer side. So, for a detailed look at how IWNNet holds up when half the planet is logged in to it, and whether all the pre-release complaints are justified, head over to [pczone.co.uk](http://pczone.co.uk).



This is Soap McTavish. He's quite a guy.



Afghanistan's back alleys are no-camel zones.



Jumping a snowmobile over a huge ravine. It could happen.



Every twat with a machine gun or grenade launcher is generally stood above you, causing you to spin round in a circle of your own doom. Furthermore, shooting peasants in a slum under a tourist attraction doesn't particularly feel like modern warfare. This nagging doubt continues when you're in North Virginia defending a restaurant called Burger Town that's piqued the interest of dozens of enemy soldiers, who may or may not know what they're fighting for.

This is of course still an adrenaline-filled ride – shooting helicopters out of the sky is fun anywhere – but compared to something like *COD4*'s seminal All Ghillied Up level, the Hollywood accusations would appear to have some resonance. All the same, the Burger level lets you try out some of the new hardware, namely the Predator drone: a remotely controlled plane that can be used to wipe out infantry. You're even

congratulated if you kill 10 or more in one strike, like some kind of human bowling game.

Elsewhere, new gadgetry is introduced when required, but you're not bombarded with it. It's possible to negotiate most levels using the weapons of your choice, with the big guns coming out for the occasional set piece.

On a more defensive note, the riot shields provide some welcome relief, as

well as some physical gratification when you smack a nearby foe upside the head with one.

As previously, the screen is often spattered with your own blood – essentially a visual health meter – and constantly seeking cover is a genuinely stressful business, with gunfire's default setting apparently being extreme. Without visual clues it would largely be impossible to know what to do, and

having a dot to follow, or a guide as to how far the next objective is proves invaluable, particularly as the shouted instructions tend to be relayed against a cacophony of explosions.

## MOVIE WARFARE

Thankfully subtitles are available, even if they're largely in military speak. It's not a massive leap of faith to suggest that Infinity Ward have been watching *Generation Kill* – a TV series about the 2003 Iraq War. It's a bleak portrayal of warfare, where shitting in a hole is as much a part of the conflict as calling in an air strike. What it shares with *Modern Warfare 2* is language, and fans will be immediately familiar with jargon like "oscar mike", "danger close", "stay frosty", "interrogative", and "how copy".

That's arguably where the realism ends though, as some of the action in *Modern Warfare 2* is preposterous. The

A gratuitous shot of the gratuitous level.



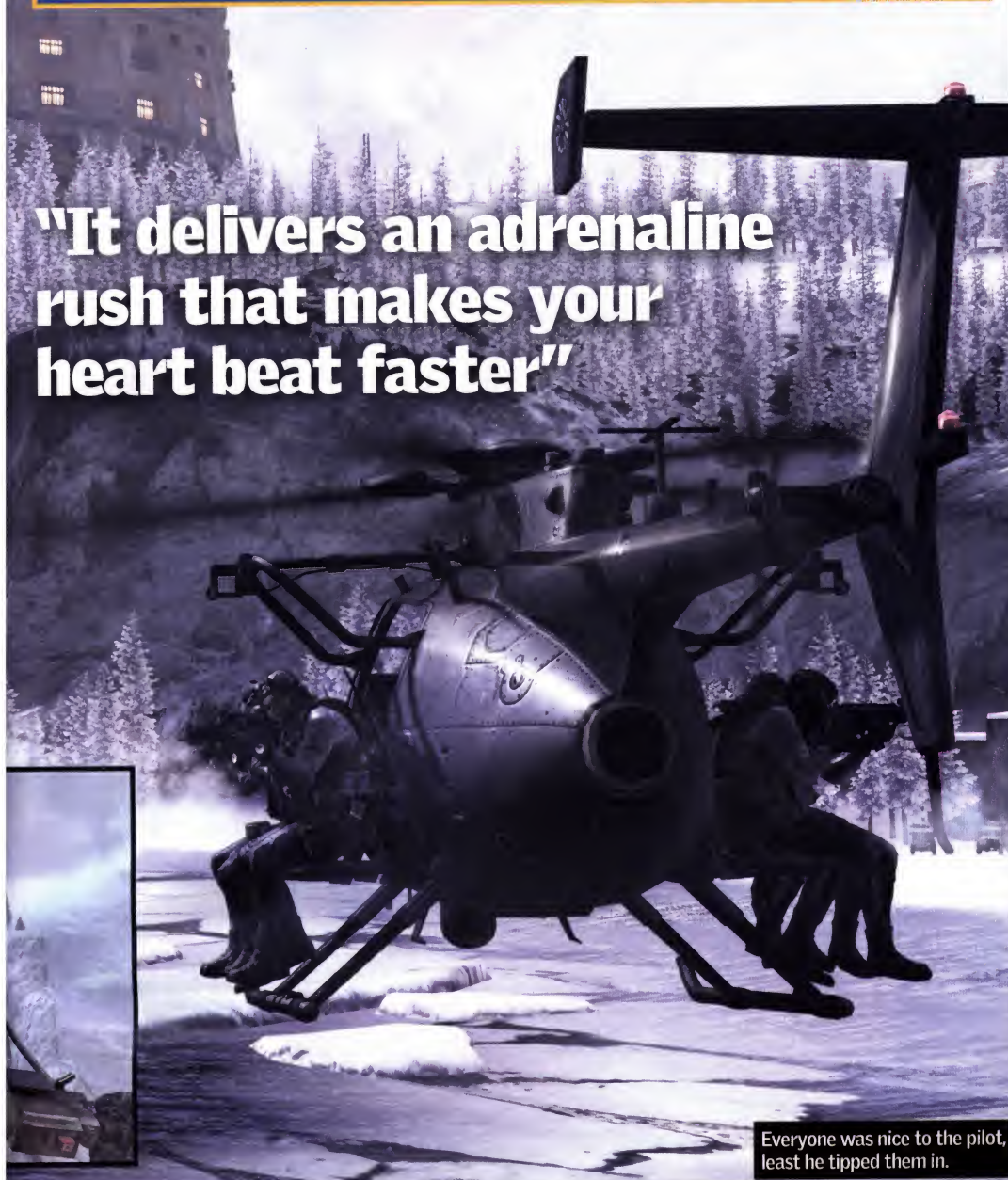


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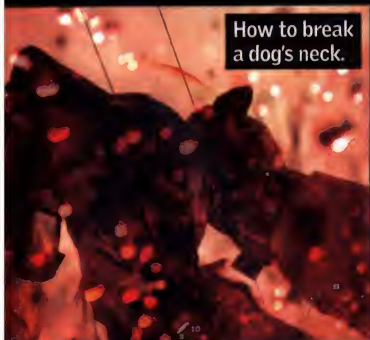
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GAMES**

**"It delivers an adrenaline rush that makes your heart beat faster"**



Everyone was nice to the pilot, least he tipped them in.

**How to break a dog's neck.**



game is essentially one jaw-dropping set piece after another, with the occasional scripted event ensuring that the story – thin as it is – continues in the obligatory absurd fashion. You certainly can't argue with the variety, which sees you variously tapping into American paranoia by protecting the streets of Washington from invading Russians, or tearing round an oil rig rescuing

hostages, with a neat slow-motion effect requiring you to kill the captors before they execute their prisoners.

With shorter missions than *COD4* you should be able to complete the campaign in less than 10 hours, the brevity being something of a *Call Of Duty* trademark. That said, such is the intensity of the experience, you probably wouldn't want it any longer, as it's a genuinely nerve-shredding business.

There's often talk of emotion in games, but *Modern Warfare 2* has no truck with such concepts, instead it delivers a sheer adrenaline rush that genuinely makes your heart beat faster, often causes you to contort your face, and frequently invites the emission of venomous language.

Given the hype that we've had to endure over the past year or so, living up to it was always going to be a difficult task. Short of the game actually

fellating you, it was virtually impossible to fully meet our expectations.

That's not to say it isn't an astonishing game – there are moments that will cause your jaw to drop – but in many ways it becomes apparent that *COD4* was the genuine breakthrough title. What Infinity Ward have done with the sequel is to ramp up the action to such intense levels that you can't help

but be overcome by it. This game is an irresistible assault on the senses that'll have you bucking in front of your monitor for the duration of the single-player campaign.

## GAMING STAR

Of course the purists will scoff at such fripperies in favour of the seminal multiplayer mode, which builds on the foundations laid by the original, despite the lack of dedicated servers. While you could feasibly drag the campaign out over a week, the multiplayer could arguably last years. And that's before you consider the all-new Special Ops mode, a series of brief missions culled from the main campaign and playable either solo or in two-player co-op.

*Modern Warfare 2* isn't an unreasonable package then, and all things taken into account, a game that you should probably consider owning if you have any interest whatsoever in the military FPS genre. It may be more of the same, albeit with a more ludicrous approach to warfare, but as a technical achievement it's largely unrivalled, with gameplay that is rarely less than ferocious, a rousing soundtrack, and voice-acting that manfully manages to carry off the cheesecake one-liners.

The hype for *Modern Warfare 2* may have bordered on the hysterical (and at least that's over), but Infinity Ward have largely delivered on its promises with something of a landmark title.

So it's a shame then that all anybody is going to talk about from now on, is that airport level. **PCZ**

**PCZONE**

**GRAPHICS** Exceptional  
**SOUND** Explosive  
**MULTIPLAYER** Comprehensive

- ✓ Gripping gameplay
- ✓ Varied locations
- ✓ You can kill dogs
- ✗ That level

**94**

Do your duty and buy it

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## REVIEWS LEFT 4 DEAD 2

### AT A GLANCE...

Essentially the same game as last time, only with funny Southern accents. Alternatively, the greatest co-op experience in gaming...

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:**  
3GHz Pentium 4 processor, 1GB RAM (2GB *Vista*), an ATI X800 or NVIDIA 6600 or better graphics card, and an internet connection for co-op play.

#### HOW IT STACKS

LEFT 4 DEAD 2 **94%**

LEFT 4 DEAD **93%**

KILLING FLOOR **69%**





# LEFT 4 DEAD 2

**Will Porter came for the fried chicken and grits, and left with a body drenched in the blood of strangers**

DEVELOPER Valve  
PUBLISHER Valve  
WEBSITE l4d.com  
ETA 17 November  
PRICE £29.99

**I'M NOT GOING** to lie. In 300 words' time I'm going to be phoning in a *Left 4 Dead 2* review that could essentially have been read from the back of the box. I'll be sure to stick in a few extra exclamation marks (along with a reference to *Saved By The Bell: The New Class*) to personalise affairs a little, but it'll essentially be a rave review with a feature list stapled to it to act as some sort of supporting argument. New special infected! More guns! A gnome! A Boomer that's fat and a woman! The words will stream unbidden from my mouth. I'll jabber like an excited child, just wait.

When I inevitably succumb to this though (and when I "turn" I would ask, of course, that you put aside your feelings and shoot me in the head in a heartbeat)

I'll be doing the game a great disservice.

What with the swift appearance and internet controversy it is very easy to make *L4D2* appear to be a simple roll-call of upgrades. It could sound like some sort of zombie equivalent of the annual *FIFA* updates: a *Redneck Rampage*-style expansion pack where the characters have a greater propensity for saying like "yee-hah" and "darn tootin'!". To do so though would be utterly unfair. What could be interpreted as a raft of fun, and potentially unnecessary, gameplay additions meld together into a fabric that strengthens the *L4D* experience to an astonishing degree.

For a start, the new creatures deepen co-op tactics, and make the game's Versus modes far more vibrant and surprising. On top of this the new

settings brilliantly evoke the sensation of real-life national emergencies and a panicking populace. Then the expanded mix of weapons hits home a feeling of personalised tactics and combat.

## BOOM-TIME

Meanwhile, throughout the game's five campaigns there's the sensation that Valve have become far more comfortable with themselves and their game. The strict format and familiar patterns of repeated build-up and climax have been smoothed over, replaced with free-flowing, organic levels where Valve begin to loosen their ties – suddenly more able to harness the feelings of surprise and delight that we're more accustomed to seeing in their *Half-Life* games. Yes, *L4D2* really is its own game. And a bloody good one at that.

You do, however, know the drill. So let's not bog ourselves down in discussions on who is a Boomer, and what does he/she do. First things first: there's no doubt that your first moments in *L4D2* will by and large comprise of racing up to zombies, taking their legs off with an axe and running around giggling. Whether you're slashing with katana, cricket bat, frying



You do miss the old cast, but Coach, Rochelle and co. aren't slapdash replacements.



pan, or have smoke trailing behind you from a blood-stained chainsaw – you just can't help but chortle as neck stumps squirt scarlet arterial spray, femurs jut out of elbow lacerations and bloody amputations are doled out to the enraged horde.

## DIS-HEAVEN-MENT

Melee weapons live in the same slot as pistols (you can't carry both, even though all players are magically presented with firearms when incapacitated) and each has a different slash speed, arc of impending zombie doom, and utterly brilliant board of crash, bang, wallop sound effects attached.

The ultra-violence doesn't stop with this new brand of up-close and personal weaponry. Midribs are blasted open with shotguns leaving nothing but fresh air and an exposed spine; businessmen's intestines are lovingly draped over the environment, spilling out behind them as they chase after you; explosive ammo sears off huge chunks of pallid flesh from a zombie's posterior... it's wonderful.

As you fight the horde there's a feeling of bodily engagement and spectacle above and beyond anything you've played before. The ragdoll zombie bodies thrown through the air after a grenade blast are rarely anything but

There's an over-developed wanking arm gag in here.



“

help but chortle as neck stumps

”

Nick's like Sawyer out of *Lost*. Only in less aftershave adverts.

pelts at you like a bull at a matador – grabbing the first survivor he comes across and carrying them off through the level with the firm intention of repeatedly slamming them into the ground, while anyone else in his way is hurled away like fleshy skittles.

Finally, the Jockey is designed to pick off waifs and strays that wander away from the party, or perhaps those survivors who relentlessly charge off ahead. Leaping on their backs, Jockeys take control of characters and ride them mercilessly into harm's way – whether

that harm comes in the form of a deadly drop, a pit of fire or the clutches of a nearby Witch.

On top of these every campaign has its own brand of zombie built to force you into ever more panicked situations. The carnival Clown's squeaking shoes lead parades of animated flesh around the level; SWAT zombies are shielded and can only be shot from behind; infected in Hazmat suits can't be set on fire; construction worker deadheads wear ear-mufflers and as such are immune to the charms of a lobbed beep-

jaw-dropping, while bloodletting with katanas, pistols and grenade-launchers never fails to daub every available surface with crimson juices.

There are also a lot more zombies around; episodes average over 2,500 of the screaming buggers running towards you with mischief in mind – about 1,000 more than you'd come across in *L4D* – which goes to underline both Valve's successful engine tinkering and the added intensity.

As for the new special infected, well they're marvellous creations, all built to mess with co-op tactics that you've been carefully honing over the past year. The Spitter – a sag-mouthed lady who trails a glowing green strand of drool – gobs buckets of corrosive mucus all over the place, meaning that it's far trickier for you and your team to bunch up and hold out in the game's various public conveniences and outhouses.

The Charger, a lumbering mini-Tank,

## ON A CAMPAIGN FOR PAIN

From Savannah, through Nowheresville and on into New Orleans...



### DEAD CENTER

The long-awaited arrival of a shopping centre, spiritual home of zombies, in *Left 4 Dead*. Dead Center begins atop a burning hotel, complete with backdraft belching doors should you open them, before moving through streets packed tight with emergency vehicles. After a dalliance with a thirsty gun shop owner, it's on to a looted mall packed with escalators, rabid deadheads and a thirsty NASCAR racing car on display that'd be just your ticket out.



### DARK CARNIVAL

This episode begins on a car-strewn highway, but soon diverts through a carnival packed with tunnels of love, dodgems and a wooden rollercoaster for you to run the length of, screaming. After this there are barns full of dead horses, and a pyrotechnic rock gig to trigger and mulch zombies in. Dark Carnival is also notable, however, for the presence of a gnome you can win in a shooting alley – carry the gnome through to the finale and... oh, you know the drill.



## ADDITIONAL PARAPHERNALIA

Some kindly soul has littered your path to safety with blood-letting treats, and some of this new zombie-killing gear is remarkably useful. For example, you'd think that laser sights wouldn't really work in run-and-spray *Left 4 Dead* combat – but not only do they look pretty freakin' cool, they're extremely useful in being able to see who's got which zombie covered in the fray. Explosive and incendiary bullets, meanwhile, laid out on the floor and shared amongst your friends are great ways of turning a fight your way. If it all gets too much and one of your buddies carks it, then the defibrillator – carried as if it were a health pack – comes out to play, and they don't have to take a trip to the closet. And there are grenade launchers and chainsaws. Which are both awesome.



This is often the last sight you'll see, when meeting a wandering witch.

"Come back! I'll bite yer katana off!"



grenade. All of this messes with the established "If X happens, then throw Y" rules that have grown around *L4D*.

Even the most hallowed of *L4D* rules, the one that simply states "Set the Tank on fire. Set the Tank on fire right now", has been subtly messed with by the sheer number of water-centric levels. In this case a glob of waterproof Boomer bile is far more likely to do the trick – turning the assembled zombies against their muscled Goliath.

Finally, and best of all, all the Witch avoidance schemes you've built up have

now been rendered null and void. Newly unanchored, the wandering crone is now as terrifying as the first time you met her – all the time. The sudden and unexpected moments of danger as you turn a corner and see her spindly form sidling directly towards you are on a whole new level of excitable terror – herding your happy band of survivalists away from her and into various cowering positions around the level.

Despite the variety of locations on show in the original *L4D*, it can't be denied that it



### SWAMP FEVER

Rednecks, trailer parks, mudmen who creep below the surface of the water and pounce. Welcome to 'gator country. Although there aren't any alligators. There are, however, a plethora of rickety structures and plank-bridges to navigate, alongside a stand-out finale in an old Southern mansion while you wait for its monolithic gates to open. Rumour has it, and I'll say it discreetly for fear of spoilerage, that this level is built for two gents of large proportions.



### HARD RAIN

Or "There and Back Again". Hard Rain has your happy foursome in search of fuel – travelling through a prime example of small town America, Witch-filled sugar mills and a vast bearings-stealing corn field before making the return journey back to a waiting boat. The only problem is that the level's torrential downpours cause a flash-flood on the way back, and that may slow you down but it sure as hell doesn't affect those zombies.



### THE PARISH

An evacuated New Orleans is currently the last port of call for our roving band of survivors – and it's here that the human tragedy of the infection is laid on thickest with evidence of mass evacuations, killings and botched government control building up. Whether on the waterfront, in the parks and cemeteries or simply amidst the bombed streets it's easily the most varied of the five campaigns – and probably has the best climax to boot.



was also heavy on the nocturnal concrete. Well, no more: the environments in which you'll fight are now vividly different in appearance and design.

On a surface level, no end of gloss is provided by the game's Deep South themes – whether you're fighting poverty-struck shirtless hick zombies in 'gator country, or fending off rabid pedestrians amidst the bright curving architecture of New Orleans. On a similar note the way that the chronological episodes track day through into night (and back out again) gives each one a markedly different ambience, alongside moments of visually-scripted beauty – like charging zombies silhouetted against the bright rays of the setting sun.

The variations in environments aren't purely cosmetic though. Some areas, such as graveyards or hedge-filled parks, change their layouts each time you play, while most levels are not only peppered with far more nooks and crannies to explore, but also provide alternate routes you could follow – whether over rooftops, through side-corridors or around the sides of buildings.

Also certain locations have been earmarked by Valve to showcase a specialised forms of danger. A scrap-yard full of cars becomes a hazard run of potential alarms that can be set off by stray bullets. While a run-down Sugar Mill in Hard Rain has become a magnet

for Witches. Here, a gaggle of the wandering death-bringers could be anywhere, and are generally everywhere.

Most impressive of all though are the brilliantly envisioned environmental effects that merge seamlessly with the gameplay – whether you're choking in the smoke of a burning hotel in the earliest episode, or trying to make out friend and foe through the torrential rain that thunders around you in the Hard Rain. Indeed, even this goes beyond the role of an occasional scripted effect – tying into the level by having weather monkey around with the entire structure of the episode it perforates. A town you've already pushed through (and probably used up all of the health packs in) has to be navigated again on a return journey – but is now waist-deep in rising water and entirely more thrilling to navigate.

## DON'T LOOK BACK

Alongside some immaculately designed mini-boss and finale areas – notably a colonial mansion and an arena decked out for a pyrotechnic rock gig – there's also a fresh emphasis on areas in which you simply have to leg it. These gauntlets cover anything from racing through a shopping mall to turn off an alarm to haring over a car-strewn bridge in New Orleans to a helicopter pick-up, pursued by enough Infected to populate Brighton.

This play style creates some brilliant



Scavenge mode is a multiplayer masterclass.



He's funny. He amuses us.



moments of selfish self-preservation, 'No man gets left behind!' sacrifice and simple nightmarish pursuit-terror.

I'm not going to lie. I miss the old cast. Well, specifically I miss Zoey. Lovely

Zoey. I am, however, willing to accept that this is a side-effect of the tender familiarity I have with the old team, rather than any perceived deficit with the new. After all, with an additional 2,000 lines of amusing and contextually-guided dialogue on top of the amount catered for by the original *L4D*, there's little doubt that with repeated plays we'll grow to love Ellis, Coach, Rochelle and Nick as much we did the originals.

Ellis the Redneck, above all, is utterly hysterical – NASCAR-obsessed and uncultured, yet simultaneously eminently lovable and sharp-witted, he's the instant hit, while the others are slower-burn affairs that prove more complex and intricate than the black guy, old white guy, biker, woman archetypes provided last time round. Interestingly too, their dialogue changes as the episodes wear on – initially they're strangers introducing themselves in a flaming shopping mall who keep getting the names of the special infected wrong, by the time they reach New Orleans they're firm friends and experienced zombie murderers.

## A STORY TOLD

As such, when you first play co-op *L4D2* you should certainly do it chronologically, and not for this reason alone. Whereas the previous game did a lot of its story-telling through the various scribbles on safehouse walls, the Deep South

# "Environmental effects merge seamlessly with the gameplay"



Day turns to night. Like a Kitora advert, with zombies instead of crows.



## HOW REAL IS TOO REAL?

Making a tough game that much tougher

Many *L4D* acolytes are now dab-hands at zombie slaughter, and despite the various tactical re-jigs provided by this sequel will still find themselves expertly offing the Infected. For these guys, I cannot recommend Realism mode enough.

This isn't realism in the sense that a friendly fire bullet to the head will kill you, but instead the more videogamey parts of the format are disabled. As such, gunshots to the body are less effective, startle the Witch you'll suffer a one-hit kill, and you can't see your friends' outlines through walls. This means that should you be Smoker-ed or carried back through the level by a Jockey you've got to be fairly hot with your descriptive skills so your buddies can find you.

For the most thrilling experience *L4D2* can provide, play through the Witch-packed Sugar Mill in Realism and the Advanced difficulty level.

Well, play through as far as you can without dying at least...

contingent make their way through locations and environments that tell their own tales. Fenced areas where survivors would queue up to wait to be assessed by a group called CEDA before evacuation, military-defined danger areas, motels in which dry swimming pools are full of charred bodies... there's a strong tang of Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* wherever you go.

What's more the knowledge of what happened in these areas before your arrival gives the incessant violence an added level of humanity and the occasional flash of guilt.

Finally, I firmly believe that with Scavenge any remaining kinks in *L4D*'s Versus mode have been firmly ironed out. Scavenge sits pretty in a fairly long list of modes (alongside 10 different Survival co-op maps and Versus play-throughs of all five campaign episodes) but is

undoubtedly the stand-out highlight. Essentially a localised Versus bout, each team must collect as many petrol canisters as they can from set points around a level and pour them into a central gas tank, while the spawning Infected team do their utmost to guess their movements and take them out.

Once one team has been killed off, the next team must beat their total. As such, not only do both teams get equal play-time as human and Infected, but games feel tighter, fairer and less predictable. Meanwhile, climactic rage-quits are also generally avoided and the Infected team find it far easier to work as a collective killing unit rather than a collection of lone-wolf bile-spewers.

Speaking of which, there is no greater joy than playing as a Charger, lining up an attack and spear-tackling a human player off a cliff-top and into the great beyond. Or, indeed, stealing control as a Jockey and leading survivors into harm's way.

*L4D2* is a triumph then, and one you can't help but feel will be far better supported with co-op content post-

"*L4D2* is a triumph, and one you feel will be far better supported"

"Hey deadhead, take a bite of peach."

00:41:30

SCORE 1/16

Enemy Team 13

Kerry protected Tactical Smoke (Kim)

Tactical Smoke (Kim) Kerry samred

You may get to the chopper. Not all will be so lucky.

## PCZONE

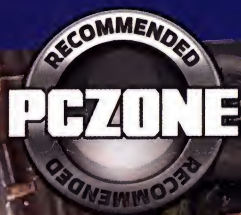
**GRAPHICS** Beautiful zombies, beautiful sunsets, crimson gore  
**SOUND** Valve's best yet  
**MULTIPLAYER** Don't play it any other way

- ✓ Inspirational level design
- ✓ New special Infected
- ✓ Versus mode perfected
- ✓ Gnomes, Boomettes, and Jonathan Coulton

# 94

The South is right





# BORDERLANDS

Keith Pullin heads into a cel-shaded killzone

**DEVELOPER** Gearbox Software  
**PUBLISHER** 2K Games  
**WEBSITE** [borderlands.thegame.com](http://borderlands.thegame.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £29.99

## AT A GLANCE...

Unique, hand-drawn style shooter with strong RPG elements meets *Mad Max* and *Diablo*, then adds some humour.

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:**  
 2.2GHz processor, 1.5GB RAM, and a 256MB graphics card.

### HOW IT STACKS

BIOSHOCK 96%

FALLOUT 3 91%

BORDERLANDS 88%

**P**OST-APOCALYPTIC BANDITS and *Mad Max*-style carnage will always have a special place in our hearts. It's the sort of scenario that shooters were invented for, and one *Borderlands* makes fine use of.

*Borderlands* is probably closer to *Fallout 3* than anything but that's not to say it's merely a cartoon remix. This is much faster moving and much funnier. The excellent character scripting provides

an irreverent cheeriness to the game, whilst the unique hand-drawn visual style turns a potentially bleak backdrop into the most fun-filled wasteland you're ever likely to stumble into.

## CEL-ING POINTS

Going with such powerful artistic design is a brave move by the developer. This cel-shaded look, used in French shooter *XIII* and, more recently, *Battlefield Heroes*

tends to divide audiences. It's a love/hate thing based purely on whether the visual style is to your taste or not. Publishers aren't always quick to take risks and so it's also worth commending 2K Games for having the balls to go with it. Many wouldn't.

In-game music is also artfully done. The dynamic tunes fade in and out

depending on the action's pace, and is the perfect companion to the visuals. But all of these athletics niceties will come to nought, if the game plays like crud. Happily, it doesn't.

*Borderlands'* single-player campaign can be played as either Roland the soldier, Lilith the siren, Mordecai the hunter, or the man mountain known simply as Brick. In true RPG-lite fashion each character has a particular style that sets them apart. Roland is a master of mid-range assault weapons like rifles and machine guns; Lilith is a sort of post-apocalypse druid who can discharge all manner of fiery and electrical mayhem; Mordecai is a long-range specialist; and Brick is essentially an old-fashioned hand-to-hand pitbull.

On top of basic personality skills, there's a detailed upgrade tree which means each character can improve further







### ROLAND

Roland is a typical soldier. Whilst he is proficient with most weapons there's nothing particularly surprising or special about him. He's the classic FPS lead character and feels the most familiar to regular FPS players.

### MORDECAI

The hunter of the group is a long-range master. He also possesses a range of impressive talents, including the ability to throw a razor sharp boomerang. He can also call upon the powers of nature for assistance.

### LILITH

This lithe warrior is not your average merc. Her spectacular supernatural powers are formidable in close combat. She's prone to taking damage though, so make sure she's protected with health regenerating armour.

### BRICK

This tough powerhouse is a short range weapon and melee combat master. He's also fond of grenades and other explosives making him the ideal character for demolition duties. Don't rely on him for speed though.



skills. Brick, for example, has the brawler, tank and blaster sub-types to toy with. Each of these sub-types then has seven individual skills that can be powered up to a maximum level of five. In total there are 21 separate skills per character to master, and that won't be achieved quickly.

The multiplayer game is an interesting excursion especially when all four players know how to play their character and work together. It's the age-old problem really, as soon as you get one team member who tries to play a tank like a sniper then it all gets a bit chaotic. Still, with a relatively small team size it's not like *Counter-Strike* or *Modern Warfare* where as soon as you put one foot wrong you're instantly flamed by half the server.

There's probably more mileage in the single-player game, particularly if you replay the campaign mode with a fresh character once you've completed it. Like many games these days that won't take a huge amount of time – maybe around 12 to 15 hours for someone who knows their way around a FPS.

We've already had the 'Which character is best?' debate and that's always a good sign. Ultimately it doesn't matter whether you play in multiplayer or single-player, the ability to take your fighter in the direction you want with



## "The most fun-filled wasteland you're ever likely to stumble into"

a few well chosen modifications means you simply cannot fail to have a blast.

The outrageous and unruly gangs of Pandora – the world you live on – are also pretty smart combatants. Instead of just lingering amongst the crevices and outcroppings poised to end your dusty existence in a surge of scripted hostility, their AI is surprisingly coherent.

When injured or overpowered they will retreat and seek cover. They also look for safety in numbers and more often than not it's the bandit with the most powerful shooter who's out in front leading the strike.

### MANY GUNS

The arsenal at your disposal is the game's most hyped feature. All the weapons in *Borderlands* are procedurally generated, which means there's never the same gun twice. Obviously, a shotgun will always feel different to a sniper rifle, it goes without saying. What Gearbox have done

is devise a system where no two shotguns are the same. Each one is slightly different in terms of damage, recoil, clip size, special modifications and various other attributes.

This sounds good, and it kind of works. There are just so many weapons, and you go through such a large variety of them so quickly, most of the time you don't notice the subtleties between shotgun 'A' and shotgun 'B' unless one of them does something dramatic like set your target on fire. At the end of the day, a shotgun feels like a shotgun regardless of whether it has a reload speed of 1.4 or 1.9 seconds or a damage multiplier of x9 or x11.

As a player, all you really care about is whether your enemy explodes in a shower of gore within an acceptable time limit. Generally speaking with Brick that tends to be one blast to the head at point-blank range with any kind of shotgun, or two



seconds of a continuous pounding with any combat rifle. If guns were rarer then maybe the differences between them would be more obvious, but when they're so abundant the system isn't so effective.

Even when taking into account the random weapon feature, gun combat is



## BACK FROM THE DEAD

Not what the NHS recommends



**ARE YOU ABOUT TO DIE?**  
The "Fight for your life" mode is a great little feature. When you reach zero health you get five seconds to kill something before the screen fades to black and you die. There's a brief moment of panic as you realise you're immobile and you're willing those bad guys to come within range.



**MOBS ARE GOOD**  
The irony is you're much more likely to survive if you're totally outnumbered by enemies than if you're shot at by a single sniper. The more enemies there are, the more likely you are to make that kill and earn your second wind, like an apocalyptic Al Pacino in *Scarface*.



**WALKING HEALTHPACKS**  
When you do manage to eradicate an enemy you get a small amount of health back and can keep fighting. It's more than possible to get into a situation where you can get three or four second winds in row. Maybe there's room for an achievement for that sort of thing?





## RANDOM CARNAGE

Turning something simple into a bit of a mess



### TABBED BROWSING

The tabs across the top of the inventory screen allow you to move between map, objectives, inventory and skills screen. It's not complicated. What a shame the rest of the interface isn't as intuitive.

### HE LIKE BOOM-BOOMS

One of Brick's strengths is playing with grenades, so it's worth carrying a few and upgrading his grenading kills. Anybody can use them. But Brick likes them a lot, and wants you to know this.

### LEARNING STUFF

As you progress more skills become available to you. Here we can see that Brick has yet to unlock two gear slots. These allow two more weapons to be selected with the mouse wheel.

### GUN GEEKS ONLY

Each weapon has a pretty impressive statistical readout. The truth is unless you're absolutely obsessed by finding the most efficient weapon, these numbers are not essential reading.



That's the last time you sell me a load of dodgy timber.

being able to take down a boss because his armour is too powerful need not be a crisis that leaves you sobbing with frustration. By hitting the tab key you can start another mission, advance a level or two and then swagger back with brand new skill upgrades and royally trounce your former problem.

Unlike *Fallout 3* you will never be asked to creep around silently and plant a thermometer in an alien's egg sack or get involved in inconsequential side-quests that drive you from the main plot. *Borderlands* is much tighter and the main narrative thread is never far away. There are one or two missions that involve collecting rare herbs or food, but even these will involve annihilating a pack of the dog-like skags or group of bandits.

*Borderlands* is gung-ho, finger on the trigger all the way. The HUD is usually flashing red, you're always looking for health and constantly worrying about ammo levels. When the crits become more frequent and heads start to pop your character begins to scream and hurl insults in a kind of insane battle frenzy.

These are the moments where you remember what a fantastic feeling it is to play a really great FPS.

There's no doubt that *Borderlands* is a fantastic game. The visuals, music, character modification, gameplay, feel and balance are all spot on. The interface, however, is not. At first it's confusing trying to work out how to change an equipped item. Eventually you get used to it and can even work out how to equip shields and grenades. Even the vending machines that sell weapons and upgrades lack clarity, and it's hard to see how that could be made counterintuitive.

### NO WASTE HERE

There are other strange foibles such as not being able to compare items you own with potential purchases. In the end you have to memorize stats of the gun you're thinking of buying and then compare it to the one in your inventory.

Aside from the pdd randomly respawning enemy, item management is probably the only genuinely annoying thing about *Borderlands*. Even now you can tell this is a world potentially rich in lore and secrets and we've just heard that the first DLC, *The Zombie Island of Dr. Ned* will be released before the end of



Aaaargh. I can't get Bjork out of my head.

the year. There's no doubt about it. This is just the beginning. Pandora is a place we're looking forward to visit again in the very near future. **PCZ**

still pretty standard, whereas close combat is a different story. Some of Brick's melee attacks are so quick it's hard to work out if you've made contact. Death animations can sometimes take a while to play out too, so you're never entirely sure if you've killed someone.

Lilith occasionally suffers from the same problem with her penchant for close-range zapping, but because her hands clearly quiver as she performs her frying duties it's not as pronounced. Plus, most of the moves she throws seem to leave her victims juddering violently whilst bathed in an ethereal glow. So, it tends to be obvious when they're done.

Most missions take place outside, and the open-ended structure means you can have multiple missions on the go. Not

**"The visuals, music, gameplay, feel and balance are all spot on"**

## PCZONE

**GRAPHICS** Adds colour to the wasteland  
**SOUND** Great music and SFX  
**MULTIPLAYER** Four-player co-op vs teams

- ✓ Aesthetically unique
- ✓ Four great characters
- ✓ Incredibly satisfying
- ✗ Confusing interface
- ✗ Random weapon creation system disappointing

# 88

A borderline classic



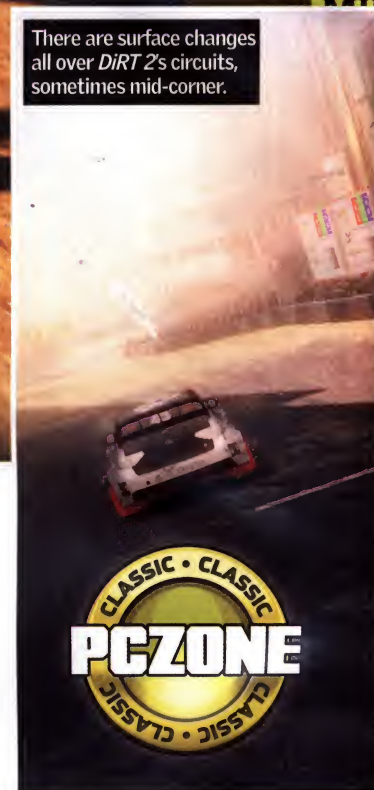
## REVIEWS COLIN MCRAE: DIRT 2

The finale takes place in a huge X-Games inspired stadium.



POS 7 / 8  
1 Ken Block  
6 Roger Amaro  
7 Player One  
8 Kent Kaufman

There are surface changes all over *DiRT 2*'s circuits, sometimes mid-corner.



# COLIN MCRAE: DIRT 2

Adam Glick is the muckiest man alive

**DEVELOPER** Codemasters Racing Studio  
**PUBLISHER** Codemasters  
**WEBSITE** dirt2game.com  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £34.99

### AT A GLANCE...

The classic rally series gets an even more 'extreme' makeover, but underneath the layers of posturing the racing is better than it's ever been.

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:**  
Core 2 Quad or Athlon64 X2 dual-core processor, 2GB RAM, and a 512MB graphics card.

#### HOW IT STACKS

GTR 2 **92%**

COLIN MCRAE: DIRT 2 **90%**

RACE DRIVER: GRID **88%**

**I**F YOU'RE OF the opinion that great rally drivers are born rather than made, then it's not difficult to imagine that Colin McRae flew out of the womb sideways at 80mph, and flew out of the delivery room in a graceful arc.

As a driver, he was a traditional flavour of bonkers behind the wheel – driving as fast as he possibly could, often crashing spectacularly and, if the hand of fate plonked him back on his wheels after his airborne barrel roll, carrying on again with his commitment undiminished. Sadly Colin's gone to the great special stage in the sky, but there's a new breed of extreme sports nutcases carrying the torch, and it's their combined spirit that lives on in *Colin McRae: DiRT 2*. After years literally lost in the wilderness, rallying is sort-of fashionable again.

The original *DiRT* was already inching towards the door when it came to traditional rally. There was still the token

inclusion of Welsh forests with unpronounceable names, but thundering V8 trucks had rolled on to the scene and direct, door handle bashing competition was introduced. *DiRT 2* is the logical conclusion – the fantasy world tour that off-road racing should be, with a festival atmosphere, far more exotic locations and very little regard for safety.

From the moment you launch the game, you're plunged into a grubby RV that's parked up in a bustling paddock area with fans hanging over the barriers

with muffled indie music coming from the tannoy. You can practically smell the sizzling hot dogs covered with that cheese that inexplicably remains liquid at room temperature.

### RALLY WORLD

Guiding you around the place are the disembodied voices of various endlessly chipper extreme sports stars. If you're easily irritated by Californian kids with more money than sense, you're going to find it all a bit wearing, but I'm actually





We suggest getting extremely familiar with the handbrake button.



Smash your car up and you can always hit the flashback button to rewind time.



Ken Block.  
He's a nut.

## TIME TO JOIN THE BLOCK PARTY

While Travis Pastrana, who guided players through the original *DiRT*, makes an appearance, the star of the show this time is probable certified lunatic and co-founder of DC Shoes, Ken Block. A man with a lot of money and a low terror threshold, Ken spends his spare time nearly chucking expensive Subarus into the LA docks, off mountains and into forests.

Remarkably the man has secured a wife and produced a charming daughter, even though he regularly endangers his life. His most famous escapades with his Subaru Impreza include mucking about on a ski slope on the mountain he owns (yes, you read that correctly), performing a 171ft jump and, most recently, converting the vehicle so that it runs on tank tracks. What about third world hunger, eh Ken, eh?

fond of them – not least because they refer to me by name (just like in *GRID*), and their constant compliments satisfy my desperate need for validation as a good driver. They're so charming and affable that even when you're on the track and deliberately T-boning them off the side of a cliff they'll use their final moments on this mortal coil to reassure you over the radio that there are no hard feelings. Most importantly they create a sense of personality in the racers you're competing against, and allow you to fabricate rivalries with the guys who consistently beat you.

This jolly band of happy campers follows you to a series of beautifully realised international destinations. *DiRT 2* is a stunningly attractive racing game and every environment, from the

baking Moroccan desert to a hazy downtown Tokyo, is rammed with visual texture.

Your first stop is the Battersea Power Station in London, and it's packed with baying fans, bathed in sunlight and full of incidental details. When I revisited the location at night later in the tour, with the place lit up like Donald Trump's Christmas tree during a power surge, I genuinely drove straight into a wall like a crash test dummy because I was busy marvelling with child-like awe at all the pretty twinkly bits. While you'll usually be

whistling past most of this stuff at a bowel-loosening rate of knots, it all combines to ensure that *DiRT 2*'s circuits are drenched with atmosphere.

The vehicles don't come off too badly either – crank up the visual settings and they become shinier than Kojak's bonce, and when you eventually come to an abrupt halt against the scenery (which you will) the entire thing crumples into a ball in a delightfully convincing fashion.

What's worth noting is that while *DiRT 2* was delayed to include DirectX 11 (see Direct Your Attention) the game looks deeply sexy even when using DirectX 9, and runs at a heady pace on relatively creaky equipment. The fact that Codemasters have married this kind of visual splendour with a sensation of speed you'd struggle to match if you attempted re-entry to the earth's atmosphere, is an enormous technical achievement.

## REALLY RALLYING

Of course racing game fans are a strange, many tentacled breed and, as *RACE On* proves, they'll put up with visuals rendered in fingerpaint as long as the handling's up to scratch. *DiRT 2* doesn't venture too far into the realms of terrifying simulation – you're not going to have to worry about

**"DiRT 2 is the fantasy world tour that off-road racing should be"**



↳ damper settings and toe in – but the handling has been much improved since the previous game.

The biggest change is a real sense of weight shifting as you chuck the car into a corner, something that makes doing the famous Scandinavian Flick – where you chuck a car in the opposite direction to the corner and then flick it into the corner for extra momentum – logical and useful. Suddenly the cars feel like real physical objects rather than twitchy hovering camera mounts and, in spite of the fact realism usually equates to

It's this kind of logical connection between car and road that makes the addition of standing water on the tracks such an excellent addition. It seems a ludicrous thing to be complimenting a game on, but the puddles in *DiRT 2* are not only some of the most beautiful H<sub>2</sub>O we've seen in a game, but they offer a tactical advantage if you use them properly. As you'd imagine, puddles always appear on the inside of cambered corners, so if you're feeling clever, you can dip your inside wheel into the wet stuff, generating extra drag on that

## "The cars feel like real objects rather than camera mounts"

difficulty, because they intuitively feel right they feel less instantly punishing when you get things a little wrong.

What's more, there's something viscerally satisfying about lobbing one of *DiRT 2*'s newly weighty rally machines into a perfect arc around a bend. Forcing the nose to dip into the camber of the corner, catching the rear with deft throttle work and applying just the right amount of opposite lock would have you leaping up like an idiot if you weren't already concentrating on transitioning into the next gravel-chucking powerslide.

corner of the car and helping your car around the corner. Of course, you're not thinking that while you're doing it for the first time, you're just intuitively adapting to the surface presented to you, but the fact that it actually works as you'd expect is a pleasing revelation.

It'd be fair to expect that in their attempt to rebrand a beloved motor sport brand as an extreme sports series, that Codies would have dropped the ball in terms of course design. In fact, despite the move towards less conventional locations, *DiRT 2* boasts some of the best

One of the rare moments where we had both doors on the car.

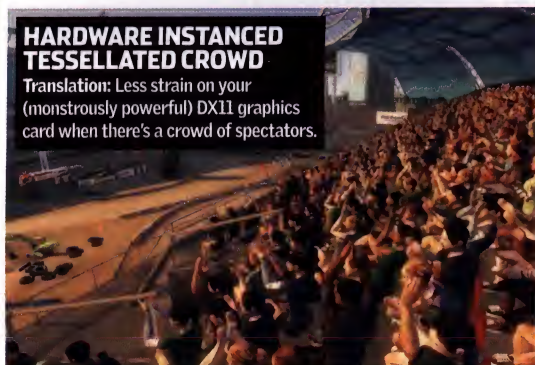


## SHINY AND NEW

What DirectX11 support means for you

### HARDWARE INSTANCED TESSELLATED CROWD

Translation: Less strain on your (monstrously powerful) DX11 graphics card when there's a crowd of spectators.



### ENHANCED LIGHTING AND POST-PROCESSING EFFECTS

Translation: Liberal use of lens flare.



### TESSELLATED WATER WITH DYNAMIC DISPLACEMENT MAPPING

Translation: Wetter water.







Each location has its own paddock. No horses, sadly.



The water effects make us moist.



There's a separate graphics setting for driver detail. We had it on max, natch.

Buggies are tough to keep on a leash, particularly over the bigger jumps.



courses ever to grace a McRae game. There's a real sense that the development team is liberated by its newly afforded international scope and as you plunge through an imposing canyon in the Utah badlands, or dart across a narrow bridge dividing paddy fields in deepest China, you'll realise that the course design is as good as it's ever been.

The tracks are also challenging enough for hardcore *Colin McRae* fans – these are as technical as any other tracks in the series and seasoned race-fiends will be in heaven. If you're new to the experience of whistling past vegetation

at face melting speeds, you'll be pleased to hear that the flashback system has made the leap from *Race Driver: GRID*, allowing you to rewind time when you stack your car against an inconveniently placed tree. It's a feature that should come as standard on all racing games, and it means that even if you're about as handy behind the wheel as a pensioner in an Austin Maestro you should still enjoy the fantasy of being a rally driver.

The only area in which *DiRT 2* struggles compared to the competition is in its collection of vehicles. There's a slim selection of cars, and a disproportionate

number of Subarus. Fortunately, the way the game is structured encourages you to pick a favourite and stick with it.

Rather than forcing a vehicle change every time you attempt a new variety of off-road racing, you can complete the game with only two vehicles – one stripped down racer and one enormous truck. You're also offered customisation options, such as new liveries and dashboard toys as you progress that, while relatively limited, at least draw you closer to an expression of your preferences than most straight racers.

## THE BEST MCRAE

*DiRT 2* is exactly what a modern racing game should be. Not only does it provide the requisite thrills when you're pounding some of the prettiest environments you'll find in the genre, there's a sense of coherency and an urgency to the off-track experience. It'd be all too easy to dismiss *DiRT 2*'s tour as contrived and a crude attempt to relate to a US audience, but actually the recreation of a working pit area brings you closer to the experience of being a globe-trotting racing hero than any game before it.

Not only that but *DiRT 2* is distractingly beautiful – the first game made the leap from arrangement of

polygons to plausible environment, and this one breathes life into those environments, filling them with crowds, noise and lights. There isn't a more exciting and involving racer around and if you have even a passing interest in cars, at the risk of sounding just as extreme as Mr Block and friends, you should definitely hit the dirt. **PCZ**

## PCZONE

**GRAPHICS** Beautiful and not harsh on hardware

**SOUND** Snazzy soundtrack, throaty engines

**MULTIPLAYER** Up to 8 players

- ✓ Best-looking racer around
- ✓ Enormous sensation of speed
- ✓ Involving career mode
- ✓ Accessible, satisfying physics
- ✗ Lacks customisation
- ✗ Not enough vehicle choice

# 90

Fast, slick and thrilling





The race to the bar is on.

My sister's mittens are more macho than those gloves.

-0:00.250  
+0:00.538



# RACE ON



Helmet on. Throttle on. Keith Pullin's off

**DEVELOPER** SimBin Studios  
**PUBLISHER** Kalypso Media  
**WEBSITE** [race-game.org/raceon](http://race-game.org/raceon)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £17.99

## AT A GLANCE...

A token expansion pack for *RACE 07*. Comes in two flavours – solo, and bundled with *RACE 07* and loads of other stuff.

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:**  
1.7GHz Pentium 4, 512MB RAM, and a 128MB graphics card.

### HOW IT STACKS

GTR2 93%

NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT 84%

RACE ON 75%

**T**HIS EXPANSION FOR *RACE 07* boasts plenty of gorgeous new car models, but its core game experience lies in providing the cars, teams, drivers and tracks for both the 2008 World Touring Car Championship (WTCC) and the Swedish Touring Car Championship (STCC). The trouble is, racing a single championship season is rather unfulfilling.

There's no sense of working towards a greater goal. It's the whole risk vs reward element that's the problem here. As a player you're never adequately reimbursed for your many dangerous heroics over the course of a brief wheel-

banging campaign. The experience, while undeniably exhilarating, doesn't deliver anything above and beyond what we've already seen – and that's our main beef with this expansion.

## SHALLOW REALISM

A career mode would have been perfect additional content. Starting as a rookie in the BTCC or STCC Championship, the player could work their way through the ranks with the WTCC title as the ultimate prize. It would be a compelling diversion from the short-lived nature of the other modes and would help *RACE On* feel like a game rather than just an additional track and vehicle directory.

The biggest diversion is, of course, the multiplayer mode where groups and leagues welcome you to the server. As this is a grown-up's game, people tend to be respectful and race fair, which is a pleasant change from console servers.



The F3000 is fast and uncontrollable.



It's the new Wacky Races mode.

If you do make it back to the single-player mode, it won't take you long to discover the game's most stunning attribute: AI drivers. Your opponents readjust their line and throttle all the time – just like human drivers. Most pleasing of all is that they recognise when they've been overtaken and won't bulldoze their way back onto the racing line, taking you off the circuit in the process. *RACE On*'s AI makes drivers in *Forza 3* and *NFS: Shift* look like Vauxhall Nova boy racers. It's this kind of thing that makes SimBin's games so playable.

Visually *RACE On* is behind current standards. Some of the environment





## TIME WELL SPENT

*RACE On* comes in two different flavours. The first is the *RACE On* expansion costing £1799, and features all data from the 2008 WTCC and STCC competitions, a stack of American muscle cars, the 2008 International Formula Masters and the 2008 Camaro Cup Challenge. Sadly, this isn't a standalone expansion, so you need *RACE 07* to play it.

So, if this applies to you, you need the second package: the *RACE On* bundle containing *RACE 07*, the previously Nordic-only release of STCC, and *RACE On* which costs just £21.99.

Next time SimBin, stop trying to confuse us and just release one version of *GTR3* please.

Thank you.



Muscle cars look great but have the braking distance of a planet.



The Caterham's in-car view is the best in the game.



textures lack detail and replacing the cardboard cut-out crowds is something we've been shouting about for years.

### WHAT? NO PRETTY?

The car models are perfectly adequate and get bashed up nicely, but a build-up of dust, oil and general grime wouldn't have gone amiss. On the plus side, flies squish against your windscreen in cockpit mode, bits of debris and puffs of smoke regularly permeate the air.

On the subject of cockpits, it's worth mentioning that the interior views are perfectly drivable. The Caterham 320 is particularly enjoyable, which, due to its open cockpit, captures that summer

Sunday afternoon classic car vibe beautifully. But then every vehicle in this package is an absolute dream to drive. They all feel so right – especially when using a force feedback steering wheel. There is simply no other driving game that comes remotely close to emulating the sensation of gripping the steering wheel of a real race car and going hell for leather in a blur of unblinking laps.

You have to wonder whether SimBin's dedication to the hardcore fan's lust for the most realistically handling cars and accurate tracks is stunting the evolution of the series in other areas – like the career mode. Still, it would be churlish to criticise the greatest racing simulation

The rain in Sweden falls mainly in Gothenburg.



developer of this tech generation for not pandering to the casual gamer.

If you already own *RACE 07*, £18 is a lot to pay for an expansion that offers two championships and a few extra cars and tracks. However, if you have yet to sample the delights of *RACE 07* then this is your lucky day. The *RACE On* bundle includes *RACE 07* plus extras and is great value for money at £21.99. And you can download it from *Steam* right now. What are you waiting for? **PCZ**



Is this interesting to you? Didn't think so.

## PCZONE

**GRAPHICS** Looking a bit dated  
**SOUND** Best sounding cars  
**MULTIPLAYER** Friendly and competitive as always

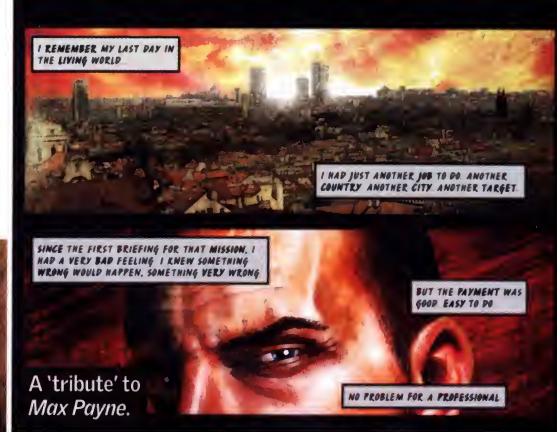
- ✓ The best physics engine
- ✓ Can drive Caterhams
- ✓ Excellent AI
- ✗ No career mode
- ✗ *RACE On* bundle is much better value

# 75

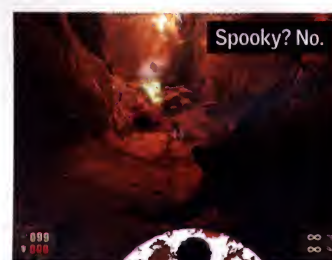
Time for a new model

**"Every vehicle in this package is an absolute dream to drive"**





A 'tribute' to *Max Payne*.



## PAINKILLER: RESURRECTION

"Or Death of a Classic" according to David Brown



**DEVELOPER** Homegrown Games  
**PUBLISHER** JoWooD  
**WEBSITE** [painkiller.resurrection.com](http://painkiller.resurrection.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £19.99

**I WAS LOOKING** forward to playing *Painkiller: Resurrection*. It was a chance for the inexplicably long-running series to be kicked up the bottom and become fun again. It's just a pity that whoever was entrusted with doing this missed spectacularly, booting the franchise right in the face and toppling it dizzily back into the

depths of mediocrity out of which it was desperately trying to climb.

The writing was on the wall, I suppose, as the developer's only other game was the disastrous *Anderson and the Legacy of Cthulhu* (PCZ 190, 14%). At least they've managed to make a better game than that, although to be honest, that's about the only real thing to praise *Resurrection* about: being better than a game that got a big splat of a Dump award in 2007.

Basically then, this game's dog shit. It plays pretty much exactly like *Painkiller* and, despite claiming to be a refined engine, looks pretty much the same as the original *Painkiller*. And, to top it all off, it's far, far worse than the original *Painkiller*.

### STAY DEAD

I suppose I'd better tell you all what's going on quickly so I can get back to criticising the game. You play a guy who accidentally blows up a bus full of civilians (and three mobsters in a car) in a *Max Payne*-style cartoon strip. You then materialise in Hell with the swishy blades weapon from the original game.

Then you kill some enemies that wink into existence right in front of you before being swamped by ghosts you can't seem to do any damage to. Luckily, they disappear for some reason after a while and you find the fabled stake-firing gun.

At that point the game crashes. You reload, but it crashes again. And again.

Sadly forced to ignore the stake gun, you plough through the level, killing pop-up creatures along the way. There's a big winding ladder that you can climb up, but it is wretchedly designed and you keep falling off. Eventually, you get to a big hall of monsters and you find an object. Is it a new weapon? You pick it up and the game crashes again.

Still interested in buying it? Didn't think so. **PCZ**

### AT A GLANCE...

Reboot of an FPS series that was tired and depressing two years ago, even if it still has a gun that fires stakes through enemies.

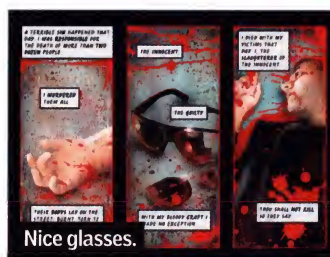
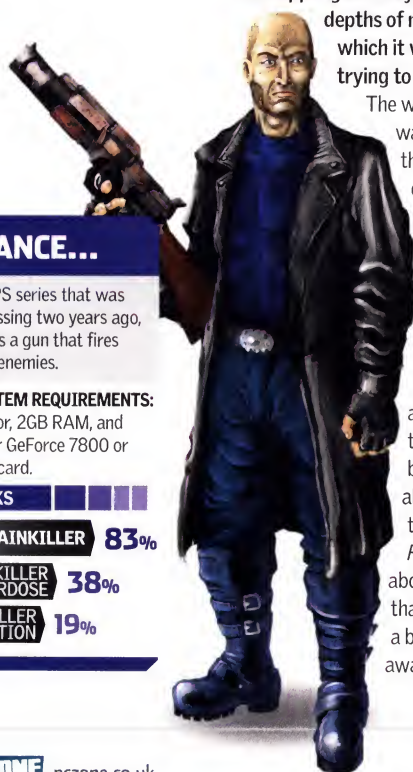
**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:** 2.4GHz processor, 2GB RAM, and Radeon 3800 or GeForce 7800 or better graphics card.

### HOW IT STACKS

**PAINKILLER** 83%

**PAINKILLER OVERDOSE** 38%

**PAINKILLER RESURRECTION** 19%



Nice glasses.

## PCZONE

**GRAPHICS** Archaic  
**SOUND** Grunts and groans  
**MULTIPLAYER** Co-op advertised, but isn't present

- ✓ Better than their last game
- ✗ Looks old
- ✗ Plays old
- ✗ Buggy as hell

# 19

Painful in so many ways

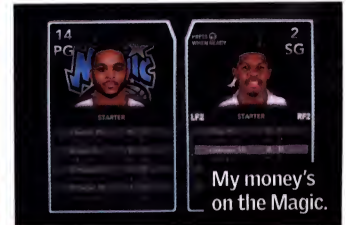




Defend your man, or you'll be punished.



He drains a three!



That's me, allegedly.



# NBA 2K10

David Brown dunks his balls into a big basket

**DEVELOPER** Visual Concepts  
**PUBLISHER** 2K Games  
**WEBSITE** 2ksports.com/  
games/nba2k10  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £12.99

**W**HILE NO SPORTS game will ever properly recreate what it's like to participate in the activity, they can at least make it look like you're watching the sport on the TV. *NBA 2K10* does this almost perfectly, with superb commentary and broadcast presentation making every game a big occasion.

This release isn't wildly different to last year's iteration, but then again, that one was so good there's really no need for wild changes to have been implemented. So just like last year, this is a basketball simulator rather than an *NBA Jam*-style flashy dunk-'em-up arcade game. You'll lose if you don't respect the fundamentals, creating space with movement, finding an open man and choosing the right shot to take at the right moment. Fail to do this and variables hidden away behind the scenes will reduce the your player's chance of nailing a shot.

Likewise, defend foolishly and the AI (and any competent human player – incidentally, playing online isn't the easiest thing to do) will rip you to shreds. Before you know it you'll be 20 points behind and the commentators will be lamenting your terrible play.

You really do need to use a pad, though. Last year's version was more accepting of keyboard input, but this year's is clearly geared towards those with Xbox 360 controllers. The main reason for this is the use of the right stick for shot control, giving you much more flexibility in and around the basket. For example, pull away from the basket to throw up a fadeaway jumper, and you give yourself a more difficult shot but increase your chance of avoiding the block attempt of a taller defender.

## STICK SKILL

Trial, error and patience will be required, but it's worth it when you feel the satisfaction of playing smooth basketball, opening up the opposition defence and nailing that three.

Defending is still very hard and you have to be patient and play the percentages, especially in the excellent-

though-tough My Player mode, where you take a self-created rookie from the D-League through to the NBA finals. It's very difficult, but it provides a great alternative to the main five-a-side game modes. The addition of this tips *NBA 2K10* into classic territory, even if the menu system is fiddly and a bit rubbish. This is the best of the best. And not in an 80s karate film kind of way. **PCZ**

## AT A GLANCE...

Quite simply the best basketball game ever made available on the PC, but it does need a pad really.

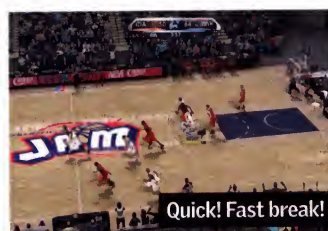
**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:**  
2.4GHz processor (2.8GHz *Vista*),  
512MB RAM (1GB *Vista*), and a ATI  
x1300 or NVIDIA 6600 or better  
greater graphics card, with Shader  
Model 3.0.

## HOW IT STACKS

NBA 2K10 **90%**

NBA 2K9 **87%**

NBA LIVE 07 **70%**



Quick! Fast break!

## PCZONE

**GRAPHICS** Excellent  
**SOUND** Fantastic commentary  
**MULTIPLAYER** Interface makes finding matches tricky

- ✓ Best basketball game ever
- ✓ TV-quality presentation
- ✓ Realistic simulation of the sport
- ✗ Interface should be better...
- ✗ ...especially for multiplayer

**90**  
Buzzer beater

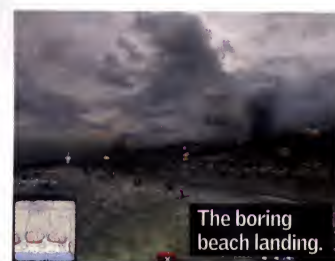




Airstrikes are pretty and effective but in short supply.



Survival mode is the best bit in this game.



The boring beach landing.



A big metal thing.

# ORDER OF WAR

Call of Faces of Duty of Men of Army of *David of Brown*

**DEVELOPER** Wargaming.net  
**PUBLISHER** Square Enix  
**WEBSITE** [orderofwar.com](http://orderofwar.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £29.99

**H**AVING A STRATEGY game that you can breeze through without actually using any strategy is criminal. Unless you think that simply selecting all your units at once and right-clicking near the enemy is a strategy. In which case, shame on you.

*Order of War* has a veneer of depth and quality – on the highest settings, it looks pretty good (even though load times and performance aren't as good as we'd have liked) and there are the usual raft of units and options. Two campaigns of nine missions each are accompanied by deathmatch and skirmish multiplayer modes. Not a single one of which is interesting.

The one shining light is the Survival mode, which doesn't fall foul of the build-and-rush mechanic because you aren't looking to expand, just defend.

If more had been made of this type of gameplay, the game would have scored more favourably.

Anyway, as mentioned, tactics don't come into the picture. There's certainly no real need to think beyond launching a full-frontal assault anyway, given that any cover that doesn't use buildings or trenches doesn't seem to do anything of note, other than block tanks a bit.

Attempts are made to disguise this, with big arrows indicating that you should do certain things to win (attack from two sides and so on). But because most of the time your units are all in the right positions to pull off said attack, it's just another form of full-frontal assault; just more fiddly due to having to move two or more fronts at once.

any internal calculations going on in the background with regards to flanking or manoeuvres like that, then it certainly isn't hinted at when playing.

Essentially, there's no point really bothering with *Order of War* other than to play the Survival mode. If you're after WWII strategy, grab a cheap copy of *Company of Heroes*. You might not control as many men, but at least you'll have some fun. **PCZ**

## AT A GLANCE...

The generically named World War II strategy game gets some generic select-and-rush gameplay to accompany its pretty graphics.

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:** 3GHz processor, 2GB RAM, and a 256MB NVIDIA GeForce 7600 or Radeon HD2400 graphics card.

### HOW IT STACKS

COMPANY OF HEROES 93%

MEN OF WAR 76%

ORDER OF WAR 58%



The cinematic camera is nice, but pointless.

## ORDER OF BORE

Things don't really improve as you go on. In fact, it wouldn't be unfair to say that they don't really change either, essentially, other than things grinding to a halt the more units and explosions are chucked about (even on reasonable systems). It would also be fair to say that the more men and units you have to control, the worse the game's problems become, with even more emphasis placed on mad rush attacks. If there are

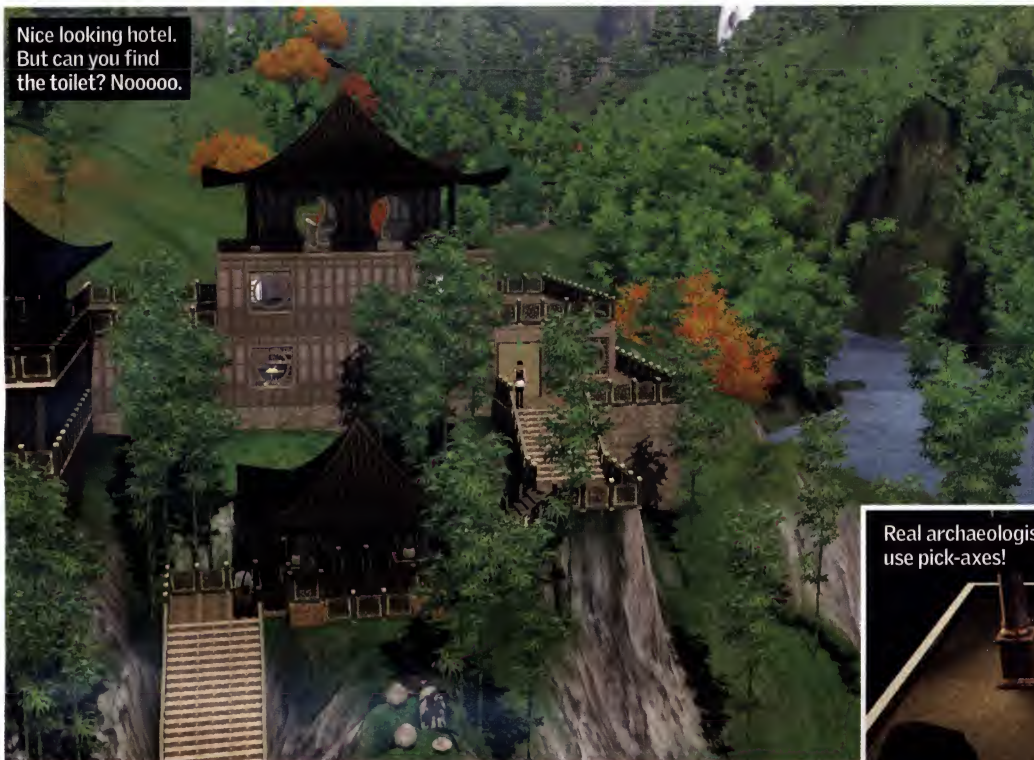
## PCZONE

**GRAPHICS** Looks great on full  
**SOUND** Annoying squealing  
**MULTIPLAYER** 4-player skirmish and deathmatch

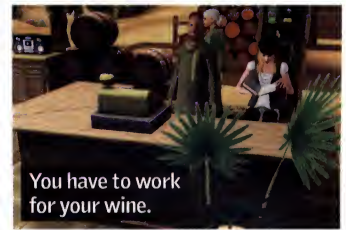
- ✓ Survival mode
- ✓ Looks nice...
- ✗ ...plays bad
- ✗ No strategy required
- ✗ Boring combat

**58**  
Boredom of Snore





Nice looking hotel.  
But can you find  
the toilet? Nooooo.



You have to work  
for your wine.



It's like being at a  
one-woman festival.



Real archaeologists  
use pick-axes!

# THE SIMS 3: WORLD ADVENTURES

*Ali Wood works for her holidays*



DEVELOPER EA San Francisco  
PUBLISHER EA  
WEBSITE thesims3.com  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £27.99



## AT A GLANCE...

A new direction for *Sims* expansions is a refreshing change and lots of fun.

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:**  
2GHz Pentium 4 (2.4GHz *Vista*), 1GB RAM (1.5GB *Vista*), and a 128MB video card. Internet connection required for registration.

### HOW IT STACKS

THE SIMS 3: WORLD ADVENTURES **78%**

THE SIMS 2: FREETIME **70%**

THE SIMS 2: IKEA HOME STUFF **25%**

**P**REVIOUS EXPANSIONS FOR *The Sims* came thick and fast, like rotten prawn-induced vomit. Thankfully, we're promised additions of that ilk are a thing of the past, and that *The Sims 3's* expansions will explore new directions in gameplay, with *World Adventures* being the first.

This add-on allows your sim to visit France, China or Egypt, which all look and feel authentic, and take on a variety of new traits, lifetime wishes, rewards and skills. When you first arrive in the country, there's a base camp where your sim lives (although you can buy a tent and food to take with you) and picks up missions. These vary depending on which country you're in, and range from exploring tombs, to getting to know the locals, and learning Sim Fu or how to make nectar (aka wine).

The puzzle missions you're set are enjoyable but not too difficult to solve (such as pulling statues onto stone slabs to unlock a door) and soon you'll be whizzing through them, collecting loot along the way, desperate to move on to the next mission and explore the rest of the country. However, it's expensive to travel, with each ticket costing over

1,000 Simoleons. Plus there's only a limited amount of time you can spend in each country.

This is a frustration at the start, as you'll just want to spend all your time on having adventures. However, the more you travel, the more visa points you earn, which, eventually, will reward you with your own holiday home.

I'd previously played preview code where I explored Egypt and that country has remained a firm favourite. There's something ancient and mysterious about it, and raiding tombs makes you feel like you're Indiana Jones (even if I had chosen to wear a beret).

I still can't help feeling annoyed that I had to pay so much for going on the

trips, and that they didn't last as long as I wanted. Waiting for the chance to travel again is mildly irritating for someone with no patience, so that's where it loses out on the score.

But *World Adventures* is so blimmin' addictive I've got my sim beaver away in the background earning some more cash so we can go and explore some more soon. **PCZ**

No MDF is safe  
around this guy.



## PCZONE

**GRAPHICS** Looking good  
**SOUND** Tailored music  
**MULTIPLAYER** No

- ✓ Exploring is fun
- ✓ Puzzles entertain
- ✓ Lots to discover
- ✗ Time constraints
- ✗ Expensive to travel

**78**  
A fresh start





# MAJESTY 2: THE FANTASY KINGDOM SIM

Keith Pullin would rather not get involved...

**DEVELOPER** Ino-CO/IC Company  
**PUBLISHER** Paradox Entertainment  
**WEBSITE** majesty2.com  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £24.99

## AT A GLANCE...

The Sims meets Age of Empires with AI-controlled units so you can just sit back, relax and watch them get lost.

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:** 2GHz dual core processor, 1GB RAM, and a 512MB GeForce 6800 GTX or better graphics card.

### HOW IT STACKS

CIVILIZATION IV 92%

THE SIMS 3 92%

MAJESTY 2 62%

**T**HIS GAME WOULD be happier playing itself, rather than having to endure human input. The concept of giving the inhabitants of this fantasy RTS minds of their own is admirable. It reduces the amount of management and instead allows you to focus on the bigger picture: the master plan.

In reality, playing *Majesty 2* is like trying to herd ants. Your heroes have an insatiable urge to roam the landscape but are never around when you need them. The first Ranger to emerge from a rustic spawning hut didn't stroll into the centre of town to dispatch the two skeletons hammering away at the pub with sticks. He ran off into the woods to slaughter an innocent bear.

The whole game is full of annoying, clumsy mistakes. Since when can a rat nibble a house to the point of combustion? Idiotic stuff like that seriously affects your enthusiasm.

The missions are repetitive and involve creating the same buildings every time to set up your heroic armies and defences. Sure, you can create five types of

hero: Wizard, Warrior, Rogue, Ranger and Cleric, but it's just a case of using a different tool for the same problem over and over again.

## DUMB CITIZENS

There's no subtlety or variety in the mission structures. A sneaky stealth mission through hills or something encouraging the player to think laterally is sorely needed. The world is not an unpleasant place to look at but there's no lustre. A desert should have sand storms skimming across its surface and a forest should be full of giant, sweating trees with unknown critters bouncing and warbling through the thick foliage.

*Majesty 2* is not the worst game ever, and certainly *The Settlers* and *The Sims* aspects of it are good attempts to breathe life into the weary 3D strategy genre. But while there is some curiosity value here, *Majesty 2* doesn't have anywhere near enough depth or variety to inspire any kind of extended interest in playing it. **PCZ**



## PCZONE

**GRAPHICS** Lacks polish  
**SOUND** Turn off the music  
**MULTIPLAYER** LAN and internet

- ✓ Fresh RTS angle
- ✓ Dragons
- ✗ Very repetitive missions
- ✗ No real atmosphere
- ✗ Narrator a cross between Swiss Tony and Sean Connery

62  
Ten years late

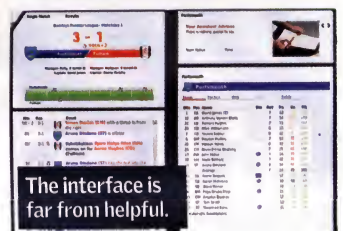




Oh look... there's some in-game advertising. How subtle.



Is all this necessary? It's only a bit of fun.



The interface is far from helpful.

# FIFA MANAGER 10

Keith Pullin is backing the manager all the way

**DEVELOPER** Bright Future  
**PUBLISHER** EA  
**WEBSITE** fifa-manager.com  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £24.99

**A** GAME THAT'S so close to being good, but has the biggest, most glaring, most obvious problem ever, is probably one of the most frustrating gaming experiences you can have. And this issue with *FIFA Manager 10* is its unintuitive interface.

The first conundrum is selecting a captain. Injured new recruit Steve Finnan somehow managed to worm his way into the armband when David James was clearly the natural choice. At this point the quest to change the captain began, and if we're completely honest, has still not been accomplished with any degree of finality.

There's a strong chance Steve will get the captaincy back in the same way that the team selection randomly changes between matches. Maybe it's an overzealous assistant manager – who knows?

Confusion reigns. No icon or option is where you expect it to be. It's also hard to understand why you can't view a player's details by left-clicking on his name. It works for every other football management game so why not here?

We could go on about the interface but there's a lot of good stuff here too. The personal life stuff can now be toggled on or off at the start of the game, which is a huge relief. Some of the other gimmicky things like predicting the outcome of your division at the start of the season may be pointless, but it softens the edges and makes everything seem less stuffy.

## ON THE LASH

The feedback from your players is also outstanding. When Aruna Dindane scored his first goal, he celebrated by taking the squad out for a drink. In the next match everything went through him and he bagged a brace. Hours can be spent micromanaging your team spirit to gain some immediate and obvious rewards.

Thanks to the *FIFA 09* engine, *FIFA Manager 10*'s matches look better than the ones in *Football Manager 10* and *Championship Manager 10*. And you can actually play matches too.

There's also the option to take control of a trainee's career. And if you want you can take your management style online and play against other aspiring Bryan Robsons.

So, *FIFA Manager 10* isn't all bad. Sure, there are interface problems, but if they're fixed, next year could see this becoming one of the two top footie management games. **PCZ**

## AT A GLANCE...

Football management, but with the cunning twist of being fairly pleasant to look at for once.

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:**  
2.4GHz Pentium 4 (2.8GHz *Vista*),  
1GB RAM (1.5GB *Vista*), and a  
128MB graphics card.

## HOW IT STACKS

FOOTBALL MANAGER 10	88%
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 10	80%
FIFA MANAGER 10	72%



Stat fetishists rejoice.

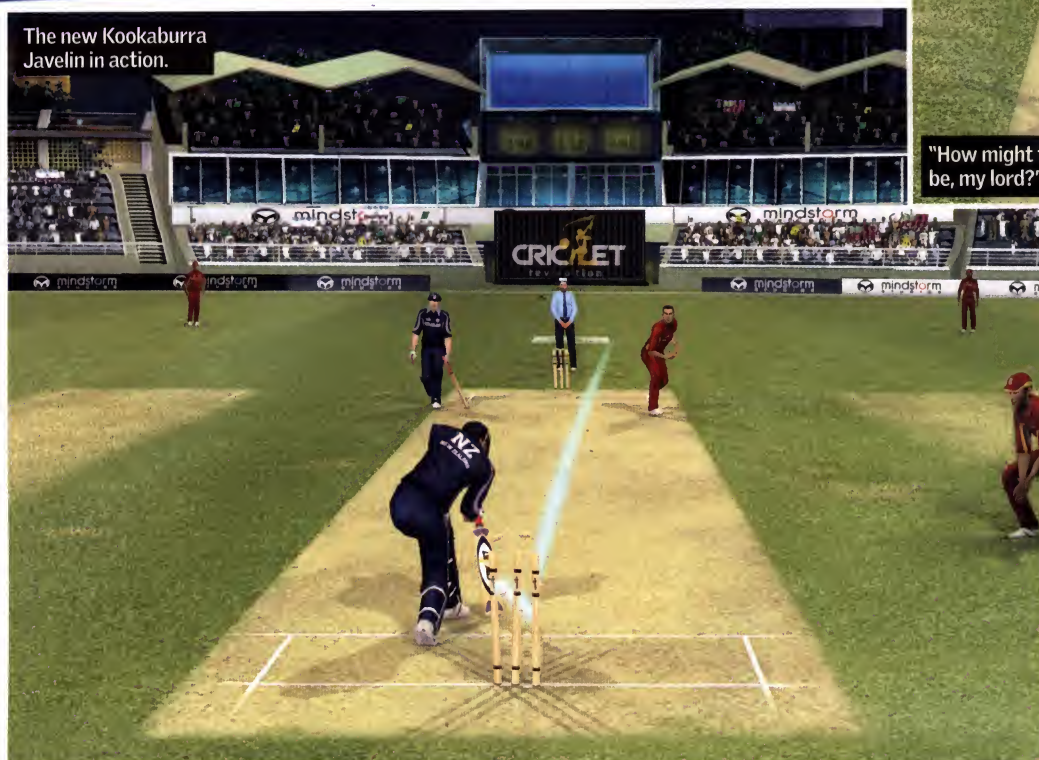
## PCZONE

**GRAPHICS** Better than the other two  
**SOUND** Good crowd chants  
**MULTIPLAYER** Yep

- ✓ Different angle to *FM* and *CM*
- ✓ Very well presented
- ✓ Online mode
- ✗ Interface stress
- ✗ More guff than *Stan Collymore*

**72**  
Flawed gem





The new Kookaburra Javelin in action.

"How might that be, my lord?"



Cheers.



"No, wait, the duck distracted me!"

# CRICKET REVOLUTION

More of a googly than a golden duck, *David Brown* slips his pads on

**DEVELOPER** Mindstorm Studios  
**PUBLISHER** Mindstorm Studios  
**WEBSITE** cricketrevolution.com  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £14.99



## AT A GLANCE...

Taking digital leather and willow out into the scary world of the internet, this is a MMO-lite cricket game with leaderboards and all sorts.

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:**  
 2GHz processor, 512MB RAM (1GB Vista), and a 128MB graphics card.

## HOW IT STACKS

CRICKET REVOLUTION	74%
ASHES CRICKET 2009	74%
INTERNATIONAL CRICKET CAPTAIN 2008	51%

**C**ERTAIN SPORTS ARE tough to recreate in the "interactive digital medium", cricket and rugby seemingly being the most difficult to pull off. Yet this effort is one of the best attempts we've seen, despite it looking rougher than a man in a sandpaper leotard.

What it does is come close to capturing the physical nature of the game of cricket, at least in terms of how the ball reacts off the bat – the one thing nobody has ever yet managed in a cricket game. It's not perfect, but genuine edged shots do actually occur, and not just in a really forced, fake manner as is the case in other games.

Anyway, it's easy enough to get the basics of cricket right – press buttons at the right time to initiate a shot, move a target around and assign swing and seam to deliveries and so on. *Cricket Revolution* has great potential, if it can find enough fans of the sport willing to pay the relatively budget price. It's got *Steam* achievements, a web community element, stat tracking and all that sort of thing. It also has challenging-yet-playable game mechanics holding everything together. Batting is a matter of tapping key combinations to initiate a stroke.

For example, a dab of the down arrow key makes your batsman play a forward defensive shot, while double-tapping the right arrow tries a hook. Hit down then left and a cover drive is done. Lofted shots and gentle pushes can be achieved using modifiers (Shift, Ctrl and Alt) to make the list of potential shots available as comprehensive as you've ever seen in a cricket game.

## GULLY AND SLIPS

Bowling is more traditional and less fun. The aiming circle is far too twitchy, but at least it means a human opponent won't just be nailing your batsman with pinpoint deliveries for the whole match.

The online play is where the game will stand or fall. Numbers aren't huge at the moment, but if you can manage to find others around the same skill level as you – rather than those of immense

ability who'll club you out of the ground with each ball – then you should have a great time, as the underlying mechanics are solid. However, it's inevitable that some bastards will find exploits and use them to grind out win after win. If Mindstorm can deal with this, as and when it happens, they could have a sleeper hit on their hands.

If only it didn't look like such a dog's dinner. **PC7**



Red means a faster delivery.

## PCZONE

**GRAPHICS** Terrible  
**SOUND** Almost non-existent  
**MULTIPLAYER** Huge potential

- ✓ Great potential
- ✓ Plays a good game of cricket
- ✓ Online community
- ✓ Edges!
- ✗ Very poorly presented
- ✗ Human players might cheat

**74**  
 Needs more Benaud





## TORCHLIGHT

Loot fans will be carrying a torch for this one

**DEVELOPER** Runic Games  
**PUBLISHER** Runic Games  
**WEBSITE** torchlightgame.com  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £14.99

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**  
800MHz processor, 512MB RAM (2GB Vista), and a 64MB graphics card.

**I**F YOU ARE a lover of loot, a doyen of dungeons or a coveter of clicks and you can't be bothered to wait for *Diablo III*, then I think it's fair to say that you'll be entranced by *Torchlight*'s lo-fi charms. It's pretty much got everything you'd want, which, by necessity, means it will have little no appeal to non-fans of the genre. Do I need to whip out the bullhorn and shout "Nothing to see here, move along"? Go on, shoo.

Now with the only eyes reading these words those of loot maniacs, then we can start looking at what *Torchlight* has to offer you. First up, there's a mix of randomly generated and pre-designed levels to plough through, all filled with your usual dungeon denizens.

The gameplay is the tried-and-tested left-click to attack, right-click to launch some other kind of attack or something. I chose to have an ball of electricity handy, although I could have summoned skeletons, used fire traps and so on.

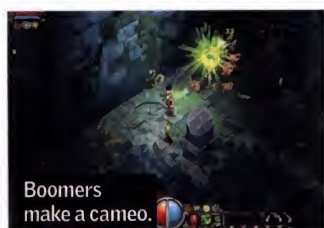


There are three characters/classes to pick from, each with unique abilities, though you can turn yours into a jack-of-all-trades if you so wish. There's no reason you couldn't pick the warrior and make him proficient with ranged weapons, for example. It'd just take longer and be a bit of a waste of time.

Accompanying your chosen avatar through the dungeons is your faithful pet, which you can name yourself. This creature is very useful, as you can send it back to town to sell your worthless junk while continuing to adventure, collecting more junk.

To be honest, I've barely scratched the surface in terms of features and nice little touches. Of course, it's unlikely to be as good or better than *Diablo III*, so perhaps it should only be purchased as a stopgap measure, but in that capacity it ticks all the boxes that a loot lover could possibly want.

**David Brown**

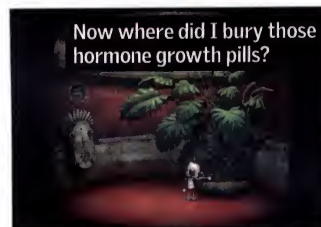


## MACHINARIUM

Welcome to the machine

**DEVELOPER** Amanita Design  
**PUBLISHER** Amanita Design  
**WEBSITE** machinarium.net  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** \$20 (£12)

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**  
1.8GHz processor, 1GB RAM, and a 64MB graphics card.



**T**HIS LITTLE ROBOT charmer is cute. The way you drag his head up and down so that his body elongates and then shortens again until his little spindly little arms poke straight out from his shiny tin can body, immediately marks *Machinarium* as a labour of love.

Every pixel is painstakingly crafted to create an atmosphere similar to *Wall-E* and like that animated masterpiece, the lead character steals the show. Every nuance from the way he hitches up his belly to the flip-top action of his head when he stores an item is beguiling. Eventually though you have to point 'n' click and that's where the complications start.

Machinarium is a robot city full of contraptions and mechanical puzzles. The hint system ushers you through the first screen without any trouble.



After that your metallic meanderings get downright frustrating due to one of the genre's oldest problems - badly labelled objects and interaction points. The imperceptible wobble of the ladder rungs at the city gate takes a while to notice and by that time you're wondering whether the charm of the visuals and regular seeking of the hint icon is enough to keep you interested.

Perseverance does reveal more beautiful locations tempered with puzzling frustrations that you know could be avoided. Old hands at this genre interface wrestling will dismiss these frustrations as normal. However, a modern, mollycoddled audience may not be so forgiving.

*Machinarium* deserves praise for artistic flair, but when it comes to gameplay approach with caution.

**Keith Pullin**







## TALES OF MONKEY ISLAND: LAIR OF THE LEVIATHAN

Belly laughs with Guybrush

**DEVELOPER** Telltale Games  
**PUBLISHER** Telltale Games  
**WEBSITE** worldofmi.com  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** \$34.99 (£21) for five episodes

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**  
 2GHz Pentium 4, 512MB RAM, and  
 a 64MB graphics card.



**L**AST MONTH WE surmised that the second episode of the *Tales of Monkey Island* series, *Siege of Spinner Cay*, was essentially the same as the first but with a less boring jungle section. The third offering, which represents the halfway point in this series, is about as different to *Siege* as you could possibly get.

Visually less vibrant than the previous two episodes, *Lair of the Leviathan* takes place inside the guts of a giant manatee. But don't let that put you off. The strength of *Monkey Island* has always been about narrative and characters and this is where *Lair* excels.

Residing within the belly of the beast is a crew of lethargic pirates who seem to have absorbed the sea cow's sluggish approach to life. Their hapless existence is beautifully portrayed, none more so than the character of Santino. This eye patch-wearing skeleton – who's been

dead, for a long, long time – never utters a single word, yet somehow manages to give the impression that he's about to deliver a monologue of epic proportions at any moment. Such is Santino's wisdom that whenever the crew vote on anything one of the pirates, the ichor-swilling Moose, always votes the same as his calcified companion.

When it comes to puzzles there's no change in difficulty from the first two episodes. The hint system means you're never stuck for long and solutions tend to be of the logical, rather than fiendish, variety.

When it comes down to it, it's fair to say *Tales of Monkey Island* is improving as an cartoon pirate adventure, but still has a way to go as a adventure game. Still, when you've got characters this good who cares?

**Keith Pullin**



## TALES OF MONKEY ISLAND: THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF GUYBRUSH THREEPWOOD

Possibly the longest title in gaming

**DEVELOPER** Telltale Games  
**PUBLISHER** Telltale Games  
**WEBSITE** worldofmi.com  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** \$34.99 (£21) for five episodes

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**  
 2GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and  
 a 64MB graphics card.



**A**ND SO, ONTO the fourth episode of *Tales* do we go, with the series progressing nicely. The end is nearing though and Telltale should now, surely, have begun to move on from merely being good to reminding us why we all loved the *Monkey Island* games in the first place. Whether they manage this is open to debate, sadly.

First of all, progress is still being made and, essentially, *Episode 4* (I'm not typing out that blasted title again) is better than *Lair of the Leviathan*. The puzzles are more challenging, yet manage to stay pleasingly un-mind-boggling. While you might need a tiny shove every so often from the optional hint-system, the puzzles have thankfully moved on from the jungles of the first (and second) episode.

So, while the level of quality is still rising, we're not sure it was necessary to have us back at Flotsam Island, running around the jungle (not so annoyingly this time) and strolling down that same street, meeting the same characters again. It's not too bad, though. There are a few new locations, such as the courthouse and the inside of Club 41, but the reuse of characters

(and character models) is yet again glaringly apparent.

Maybe I'm being too harsh. In terms of advancing the plot of a series, and bringing in some interesting twists, this episode really does work well. I'm still hung up on the fact that the same single character dominates the two new locations you're initially presented with. Couldn't they have come up with a different one for each? Or is this what we're going to be cursed with in any and all episodic games in the future?

Still, you'll have a great time playing them, so *The Trial* etc. still gets a hearty recommendation. All eyes on the last episode to see if Telltale can pull things off in style.

**David Brown**





# DRAGONICA

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# State of Play

We look at the changes made to games after their release...

The entrance to the dungeon of decidedly ropey graphics...

THIS MONTH...

## ULTIMA ONLINE

PUBLISHER EA DEVELOPER Origin Systems, EA WEBSITE [uoherald.com](http://uoherald.com) PRICE \$39.99 (£24), \$12.99/month (£8/month)

**R**ETURNING TO THE world of *Ultima Online* after a 10-year break is like watching old reruns of '80s low-budget sci-fi shows: you never noticed the ropey special effects as a child, so you're left with a sense of disappointment in just how primitive it was back then.

Released in 1997, *Ultima Online* wasn't the first massively multiplayer online game to hit the market, but it was the most successful, snagging well over 200,000 subscribers in its first year alone. Everyone wanted a slice of virtual pie and gamers were willing to mount up enormous phone bills to quest in the fantasy world of Britannia.

### FACT

A player subscribing to the life of the game has spent a whopping £1,150 on subscription fees over the past 12 years.

This was a game marred by some poor development decisions and the release of *EverQuest* in 1999 stole much of its player base. It's not hard to see why, for *UO* sets out to be as difficult to play as possible. The basic control systems are far from intuitive, and little things like the lack of icons over quest giver's heads and the Old Worlde-style text boxes, which are too difficult to read, makes the game feel exceptionally clunky and dated. Nothing works as it should, which makes for an arduous and time-consuming online experience.

A major criticism of the game was that the death penalty was too punishing. The death of your character resulted in

the loss of everything you were carrying, resulting in a desperate search to recover your corpse (and your gear) before someone stole it. Bands of player killers would lay in wait along the major travel routes, ready to attack and steal your hard-won gear, leading to frustration levels for casual gamers being high.

### DEATH BLOWS

This controversial death system was adopted by *EverQuest*, but was refined in *Asheron's Call* where just a few of your high value items dropped when you died. Blizzard further refined the system to a

more player-friendly stance in *World of Warcraft*, where a player dropped a small amount of gold and perhaps a trophy on death. Players don't like losing their hard-earned items, especially to other players, yet compulsory PvP continued in *UO* until blessed items, that didn't drop when you died, were introduced.







Bob wondered if the magic mushrooms were really worth the effort.



You... shall... not... pass...!

Finally, the *Renaissance* expansion gave players the choice of PvP or non-PvP worlds in which to reside.

Another criticism of the game was its graphics, which were dated even back in 1997. The developers released a 3D client in 2001 to compete with rising 3D MMOs. Buggy and unstable, it was axed in 2007, in favour of a new 3D engine in the *Kingdom Reborn* add-on.

On a positive note, *UO's* in-game community is made up of decent folk who've been playing for years and who are only too happy to take time to help a newbie. There's a satisfying lack of trash-talking gamers with ridiculous names, and the general chat channel isn't

## "This is the first truly amazing multiplayer game I've ever played"

92% – Chris Anderson, PC ZONE #80

spammed with endless out-of-character discussions – a definite plus.

Sadly, a player new to the game won't see many other characters as the starting areas are all but deserted, except for NPCs and monsters – a sign that fresh blood isn't coming into the game with any frequency.

### DEATH SLOWS

*Ultima Online* offers little for the modern gamer. It's an antiquated throw back to a more naive time and the developers have done little to modernise the game over the years. It might be great for a weekend of retro gaming, but getting a character to the highest levels is a quest way too challenging, especially when there are more visually appealing and accessible MMOs out there.

While the developers have recently released Sygjan Abyss – *UO's* first expansion in four years, which is only available online, more recent MMOs will

continue to drain subscribers from *Ultima Online*, as there is very little here to draw in newer gamers.

The lack of modern developments has served a death blow to the virtual world of Britannia, and while the hardcore devotees will continue to support the game for as long as the servers are operational, *Ultima Online* is in its final death throes. Soon, even the Guild of Necromancers won't be able to save it from extinction.

### VERDICT

With a massive world and countless adventures to be had, *Ultima Online* has some appeal for the RPG-starved fantasy gamer. However, the slow pace, poor character development, and the punishing difficulty levels will make most turn off in frustration.

**Stuart Renton**

### THE STORY SO FAR... ULTIMA ONLINE



#### MAY 2000

*Renaissance* featured the twin worlds of Felucca and Trammel (which didn't allow PvP). New players breathed a sigh of relief.



#### MARCH 2001

*Third Dawn* included an updated 3D client to compete with games like *EverQuest*. Filled with performance issues, it was dropped in 2007.

#### FEBRUARY 2003

*Age of Shadows* saw Paladin and Necromancer classes arrive. In response, subscriptions peak at just over 250,000 accounts.

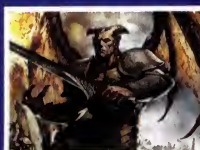


#### NOVEMBER 2004

*Samurai Empire* was based on Japanese mythology. It added Ninja and Samurai classes, and a new area to explore: the Tokuno Islands.

#### AUGUST 2005

*Mondain's Legacy* brought in a playable race – the elves – and a new skill, spellweaving.



#### SEPTEMBER 2009

*Stygian Abyss* is *UO's* first expansion in four years, features the Stygian Abyss (from *Ultima Underworld*), the Gargoyle race, and an update to the game client.



# Budget

Broke, Richard Cosgrove turns to the Polish for games

## JUDGE DREDD VS DEATH

PUBLISHER Good Old Games WEBSITE [gog.com](http://gog.com) PRICE \$599 (£3.50 approx)



Can't you just taste the sexual tension?



No scenery is safe from Dredd.



Deal with peaceful protestors unpeacefully.

BE THE LAW.

JUDGES OUT!

JUDGES OUT!

**WHAT AMazes ME** about 2000AD is how few of its stars are in games. Where's the *Halo Jones* point-and-click, *Bad Company* squad shooter, or the *Zenith* RPG? But at least we've got two decent 2000AD shooters: *Rogue Trooper* and this.

*Dredd vs Death* is a great FPS. Your main weapon, the Lawgiver pistol, has

a wide variety of ammo types – from heatseekers to rubber ricochets that bounce around rooms – giving you an armoury other FPSs can only wish for from the go. The story's cool, the graphics remain fairly good, there's enough action to stop you ever getting bored, and it's packed with black-as-sin humour.

Gameplay-wise it's also innovative: Dredd is a cop, but unlike cops in every other FPS he's expected to arrest people. Don't and your 'law meter' – a measure of how good a cop you are – drops to nothing, and the Special Judicial Squad (bastard-hard Judges) come to kill you. To keep the meter up you need to arrest perps, generally by shooting their buddies until their morale breaks and they surrender.

Despite all this *Dredd* has downers. It remains buggy. Nothing serious, but the occasional AI screw-up will have you

**BUDGET  
GAME  
OF THE  
MONTH**

WTFing. And although Dredd is Mega City One's top Judge, here he's an errand boy.

The two main flaws are that the vampires (of which they are legion) are unbelievably fast, soak up bullets, and travel in packs. In short, they're too lethal to be fun to fight. Worst of all, the game's final stages lose originality, turning *Dredd vs Death* into just another FPS.

But you won't find another FPS of this quality for £3 these days. Prettier and flashier ones maybe, but none as entertaining as this.



PCZONE

77

Mega City Fun

**THIS  
MONTH  
PCZONE  
SAVED MONEY BY...**

Steve stopped drinking five pints of coffee a day.  
**SAVING** Migraines



The NHS forgot David was booked in for an MRI scan.  
**SAVING** About £100,000

Richard went to the wrong comedy club, ie not the one he had free tickets for.  
**SAVING** -£16



Yep. Your pistol did that. Your freaking PISTOL!

Body parts taken as payment



# COMMANDOS 2+3

PUBLISHER Good Old Games WEBSITE gog.com PRICE \$9.99 (£6 approx)

**IF EXPLOSION LITTERED**, bullet-ridden, WWII action is what you love, you'll hate *Commandos*.

The games are unplayable until you've studied their manuals. And that means



proper study: paying attention, taking notes, and memorising what hot key does what, and what each of your team is capable of. As with flight sims, every button on the keyboard does something different – from throwing grenades, searching bodies, to knocking enemies out. This means *Commandos* games are in no way intuitive.

You also have a wide squad to pick teams from – ranging from a brawny bruiser who beats up Nazis, a hot "seductress" who leads Nazis to their doom, and a small dog who... well... barks at Nazis. All of the characters have wildly different special abilities, and finishing

these games involves knowing exactly how to deploy them, planning your assault, and, often, split-second timing.

But if you invest the time into this game, it's brilliant. The levels are beautifully designed to be both varied and are extremely challenging. There is very little chance of you solving any level on your first attempt.

*Commandos 2+3* isn't for those looking to pick up and play a puzzle game. But if you want to challenge your logic centres, these two will suffice.

PCZONE  
72

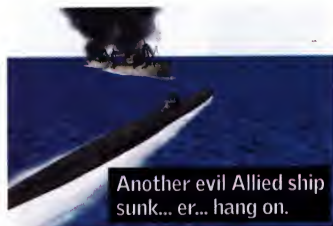
# SILENT HUNTER II

PUBLISHER Good Old Games WEBSITE gog.com PRICE \$9.99 (£6 approx)

**PING IS USUALLY** a lovely sound. It's the sound of scoring a point, of picking up a star, or doing something equally positive. But in *Silent Hunter II*, ping is a sound of pure terror. For when you're pinged, you don't have long to live.

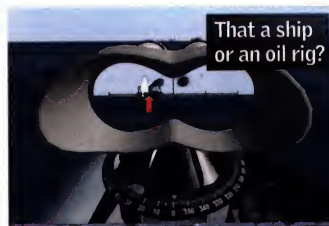
For the uninitiated, this game is a U-boat simulator set during the Battle for the Atlantic – the naval campaign that lasted the duration of WWII.

While it's realistic, like any good simulator *Silent Hunter II* is also completely unforgiving (for instance, the engine controls are all in German). You have to pay attention to what's going on, plan thoroughly, and learn how the submarine controls, sonar system, combat station and navigation work.



But once you have, the only games that really can beat *Silent Hunter II* for tense, tactical combat, are the later titles in this series.

There are a few downsides to this game. While there's a multiplayer function, allowing you to play with other U-boats and against destroyers (if you find someone with a copy of *Destroyer Command*), it's excessively buggy. This is



fixable by using the unofficial patch *Projekt Messerwetter*, but remains a massive flaw. Also, with almost all of its (equally great) sequels similarly cheap, recommending this one over those ones becomes difficult.

One for the completists only, we're afraid.

PCZONE  
68

## AND THE REST...

The other cheap releases out now



### REALMS OF ARKANIA 3

PRICE \$5.99, Good Old Games  
Teutonic fantasy RPG with turn-based combat. For those who miss SSI's AD&D games.

53



### COMANCHE VS. HOKUM

PRICE \$5.99, Good Old Games  
A first-rate attack helicopter simulator, that's got huge support from modders.

76



### PORT ROYALE

PRICE \$5.99, Good Old Games  
It's like *Sid Meier's Pirates*, but it replaces duels and dancing with trading and politics.

69

## PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET GAMES



### MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

PRICE £10, White Label  
The historical RTS game that set the standard for others to follow. Buy it, if only to try out the mods.



### FAR CRY

PRICE £5, Sold Out  
With *Far Cry 2* out it's time for the original to take the spotlight again. The second-best FPS ever made.



### THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

PRICE £5, Mastertronic  
If RPG is your favourite genre, you could do a lot worse than this epic, sprawling classic.



### PSYCHONAUTS

PRICE £10, Steam  
You won't have more fun than this psychological platformer unless *Brütal Legend* appears on the PC.



### SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

PRICE £5, Sold Out  
That's all the genres covered, isn't it? RTS, FPS, RPG, platformer and pirate. Yep, that's really everything.



# Buyer's Guide

Don't stop buying them until they're bought

## PCZ TOP 5

MOST QUOTED QUOTES (PROBABLY)

- 1 "WAKE UP, MR. FREEMAN."  
G-man, *Half-Life 2*.
- 2 "THE CAKE IS A LIE."  
Graffiti, *Portal*.
- 3 "WOULD YOU KINDLY?"  
Atlas, *BioShock*.
- 4 "ALL YOUR BASE ARE BELONG TO US."  
CATS, *Zero Wing*.
- 5 "WAR. WAR NEVER CHANGES."  
Introduction, *Fallout*.



## PCZ TOP 5

MONSTERS THAT ARE RARELY THE HERO

- 1 SERIAL KILLERS
- 2 WEREWOLVES
- 3 DRAGONS
- 4 GODZILLA
- 5 ZOMBIES



## PCZ TOP 5

MOST OVER-USED SETTINGS

- 1 WORLD WAR II  
Dear God, use another war.
- 2 PSEUDO MIDDLE-EARTH  
Tolkien has a lot to answer for.
- 3 NEW YORK  
Overt and thinly disguised (à la GTA).
- 4 A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY  
Location for nearly every sci-fi game ever made.
- 5 CYBERPUNKED EARTH  
Location for all the remaining sci-fi games ever made.



## FPS



### HALF-LIFE 2 + EPISODES

PCZ Issues: 148 (97%), 170 (91%), 187 (82%)

Excelling in terms of action, storyline, emotion and ingenious set pieces, the continuing adventures of Gordon Freeman have yet to be equalled. Yes, a moderate amount of the action has faded through repetition by the time the episodes kick in, but with its Combine-defying freedom fighting, this is still the most finely crafted shooter experience ever released on PC. Gordon's alive, and long may he remain so.



### LEFT 4 DEAD

PCZ Issue: 202 - 93%

The only thing the we like more than killing zombies is killing zombies as a team. And that's what L4D provides: a chance to scream with your buddies as you kill endless amounts of mindless and murderous plague victims.



### TEAM FORTRESS 2

PCZ Issue: 187 - 93%

Beautifully balanced and engaging, Valve's update of the classic mod is a triumph, bringing together the best of online shooters and topping it all off with superb animation that rivals the best Pixar's films.



### CRYSIS WARHEAD

PCZ Issue: 199 - 92%

This standalone expansion only takes a few hours to complete, but it reims in the harsh system demands of the original, and contains fantastic action storytelling, and a much improved alien AI.



### FAR CRY 2

PCZ Issue 201 - 90%

A triumph of non-linear gameplay, *Far Cry 2* offers an astounding chunk of Africa in which to play with guns, flames and explosions. The residents are too tenacious, but in a world this well-realised, you won't care.



### CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

PCZ Issue: 188 - 89%

Big, brash and extremely loud, Infinity Ward's latest ultra-intense shooter offers some strikingly original military action. With superb multiplayer in tow, it's often an utter delight to play.



### BIOSHOCK

PCZ Issue: 185 - 96%

This psion of *System Shock 2* will suck you right into its intricate, frightening, art deco world. A destroyed Utopia under the sea, terrifying characters and emergent combat make this an unmissable experience.

## STRATEGY



### EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR

PCZ Issue: 205 - 94%

Vast yet manageable, accessible yet hardcore. All four words and more describe the best *Total War* game money can currently buy. With the addition of dramatic sea battles and an extended global campaign map, there's simply nothing else with the same grand scope that remains as easy to get into. We feel that the only game that will topple this game from its perch as the best strategy game around will be the next game in the *Total War* series. It really is that good.



### COMPANY OF HEROES

PCZ Issue: 173 - 93%

With this game Relic took the best bits from RTS games and left out the crap, creating a game that's accessible, taxing and exciting. And its expansions *Opposing Fronts* and *Tales of Valor* keep the action coming.



### WORLD IN CONFLICT

PCZ Issue: 186 - 92%

A stunning RTS set during the Cold War, offering innovative online play, a solid single-player campaign that combines great gameplay and a good story, jaw-dropping graphics and the best nuclear blast you've seen.



### CIVILIZATION IV

PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%

A *Buyer's Guide* without a *Civ* game would be a sorry place, and the latest version is the greatest yet. Now with added warmongering and diplomacy in the expansion packs *Warlords* and *Beyond the Sword*.



### SINS OF A SOLAR EMPIRE

PCZ Issue 193 - 91%

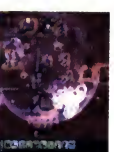
This startling beauty of an RTS seemed to come from nowhere, and quickly converted us from indifferent idiots into grateful idiots by surprising us with accessible complexity.



### MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

PCZ Issue: 175 - 91%

A blend of maniacal plotting on the strategic map and cheering with delight as your warriors collide spectacularly with your opponents' armies. Middle Ages war fun.



### SUPREME COMMANDER

PCZ Issue: 179 - 88%

Huge battles of thousands of air, sea and land units? Giant stompy robots and a superb tactical map? One of the most original RTS titles around? Check, check and check.

## ACTION/ADVENTURE



### GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

PCZ Issue: 203 - 91%

We PC users have had to wait a while (OK - we had to wait a bloody age) before we could return to Liberty City with Niko Bellic, but the delay has been worth it. This version of *GTA4* adds graphics that are a cut above those seen on the consoles, expanded multiplayer modes, and an exclusive video editor, to Liberty City's free-roaming world and the sure-to-be classic storyline of Bellic's American dream becoming an American nightmare.



### MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

Payne is getting old, but it shows how to do bullet-time right. Noirish tone, a glowering voice-over and remarkable gun action mean that this is still a force to contend with.



### GEARS OF WAR

PCZ Issue: 188 - 90%

*GOW*'s tactical battles and toughness make you fear the bullets flying around you. With the climatic Brumak battle, the PC has the best version of this excellent shooter. Shame we'll never see *GOW2*.



### FAHRENHEIT

PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%

Murder most foul, and you're the killer. *Fahrenheit* boasts a twisting, turning, brilliantly told story, featuring multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings.



### PSYCHONAUTS

PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



### BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillis is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



### BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

PCZ Issue 213 - 89%

Proof that licensed superhero games don't have to suck, *Arkham Asylum*'s mix of action, RPG and stealth-'em-up play makes it a near classic. The best *Batman* game we've ever seen.



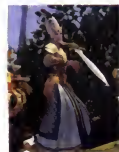
## MMOs



**WORLD OF WARCRAFT**  
PCZ Issue: 152 – 95%  
Blizzard's recreation of Azeroth as a living virtual world doesn't disappoint. While its graphics are dated, it's beautiful to watch, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



**THE LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE**  
PCZ Issue: 182 – 87%  
A near-perfect recreation of Tolkien's tales, with solid combat and engaging plots, in a tasty MMO bundle. Meet Gandalf! Play as a hobbit or a spider! Middle-earth awaits...



**WARHAMMER ONLINE: AGE OF RECKONING**  
PCZ Issue: 200 – 92%  
Mythic slips *Warhammer* into their realm vs realm template. Even the most reluctant PvPer will launch themselves into huge open warfare, and drop into temporary group quests.



**GUILD WARS**  
PCZ Issue: 156 – 94%  
How to make a gaming accessible to the masses. A lot of thought has been applied, and there are no subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home, thanks to a totally skills-based setup.



**EVE ONLINE**  
PCZ Issue: 130 – 88%  
*Elite Online* has been a long-held fantasy for old school gamers, and this space sim has come the closest yet to making it a reality. A slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining to trading to piracy.

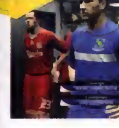
## SPORT

NEW ENTRY!



**FOOTBALL MANAGER 2010**  
PCZ Issue: 214 – 88%  
Every year sees another *Football Manager* appear to break up relationships across the country. But while *FM2010's* updates mean it still holds the top spot, *Champ Man* is closing in.

NEW ENTRY!



**PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2010**  
PCZ Issue: 214 – 85%  
The football industry may ignore *PES*, but *PES* doesn't ignore PC users. This year's *PES* includes updates from the console release, something that *FIFA 2010* can't claim.



**NBA 2K9**  
PCZ Issue: 203 – 87%  
Basketball will never be as popular as football in the sports games stakes, but *NBA 2K9* deserves to be played. This is a superb recreation of America's second-favourite sport that won't disappoint on any front.



**FOOTBALL MANAGER LIVE**  
PCZ Issue: 205 – 85%  
All the joy of *Football Manager* with added MMO fun. Build your own team from scratch and develop your manager's skills, to let you take on other managers around the world.

NEW ENTRY!



**CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2010**  
PCZ Issue: 214 – 80%  
With a new 3D match engine, and new features like the set piece creator, *Champ Man 2010* has jumped up in quality. While it still can't match *FM2010's* depth, it's far more accessible.

## SIMULATION



**X3: REUNION**  
PCZ Issue: 162 – 92%  
Finally, a space sim to better *X2: The Threat*, and it just happens to be the sequel. This is possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Oh, and it plays pretty well to boot. Why not get reunited with the *X Universe*?



**IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES**  
PCZ Issue: 128 – 92%  
While flight sims are getting rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None are more impressive than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



**THE SIMS 3**  
PCZ Issue: 209 – 92%  
*The Sims 3* is like having your very own reality TV show in your PC, and just as addictive. Near complete freedom of gameplay lets you be a vicious diety, a benevolent dictator, or just a creepy voyeur.



**MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR X**  
PCZ Issue: 175 – 89%  
The latest (and maybe final) in the *Flight Simulator* series is the biggest since Microsoft started using actual polygons. What's more, the visuals may just sear your eyeballs.



**OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING**  
PCZ Issue: 213 – 90%  
Like its peer *Arma II*, *OpFlash 2* aims to bring realistic warfare to your PC. But unlike its peer this game doesn't forget it's meant to be fun, not some kind of military training aid.

## DRIVING/RACING



**GTR2**  
PCZ Issue: 173 – 92%  
Pick up this scarily realistic driving sim and race the car of your dreams. It comes with an improved driving model, new game modes and many other improvements. Guaranteed to make you feel like the Stig.



**BURNOUT PARADISE: THE ULTIMATE BOX**  
PCZ Issue: 205 – 89%  
This game has set the standard for online arcade racers. Packs more speed than a drug dealer and more fun than slapping a bag full of Jonathan Rosses and Russell Brands.



**RACE DRIVER: GRID**  
PCZ Issue: 195 – 88%  
Codemasters moves the series from its historical simulation roots, strips off the TOCA and creates a movie-realistic game with plenty of play modes and global challenges. Kind of like *Burnout*, but with proper tracks.

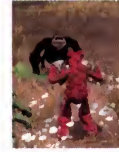


**COLIN MCRAE: DIRT**  
PCZ Issue: 183 – 88%  
This time the rallying legend treats us to a host of other off-road events, an excitable Travis Pastrana and some of the best-looking graphics to grace any driving game on PC. Time to get down and dirty with a 4x4.

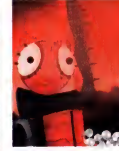


**NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT**  
PCZ Issue: 213 – 84%  
The *Need For Speed* series gets serious. Well, not too serious as the game is still weighed in the favour of fun over realism. But this is a polished release, and the best *NFS* around.

## ODDBALL



**SPORE**  
PCZ Issue: 199 – 95%  
This is four charming mini-games and an excellent space strategy game, glued together with a bunch of creation kits. It's also a beautiful one-off that is so well-realised that you should experience it yourself.



**WORLD OF GOO**  
PCZ Issue: 201 – 90%  
A stroke of indie genius, *World of Goo* is a puzzler in which you erect fantastic goo-based structures across a myriad of unique and intriguing levels. Novel at every turn, this indie title is simply irresistible.



**PORTAL**  
PCZ Issue: 187 – 89%  
Ingenious and absurdly funny, *Portal* is a four-hour slice of perfect puzzles and discovery. Hurting yourself through floors and walls sounds odd, but modern games are rarely more delightful.



**GARRY'S MOD**  
PCZ Issue: 179 – 88%  
The God game-like *Garry's Mod* gives you the tools to create almost anything you can think of in the *Source* engine, from working robots to saucy ragdoll JPEGs. Fun and easy to use, try it out and see for yourself.

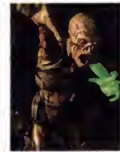


**BRAID**  
PCZ Issue: 209 – 90%  
*Braid* is extremely pretentious, but extremely well made, with time-bending twists that'll provide a challenge to new and veteran platformers. It also has a secret editor for making your own levels.

## ROLE-PLAYING



**THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION**  
PCZ Issue: 167 – 95%  
*Oblivion's* sublime graphics, intuitive character-creation and massive freeform gameplay, put paid to the myth that you have to own a beard and live with your mum to enjoy RPGs.



**FALLOUT 3**  
PCZ Issue: 201 – 91%  
While it does play like *Oblivion* in a sci-fi skin, this is a great open-world that's just as entertaining if you just wander across Washington state than if you follow the plot. And DLCs are adding to its greatness.



**DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS**  
PCZ Issue: 214 – 93%  
By delivering an RPG that's at once realistic, brutal, heroic, sexy and immersive, BioWare have secured their position as masters of the RPG genre. We're already eager to see what they'll do with *Dragon Age 2*.



**THE WITCHER**  
PCZ Issue: 188 – 88%  
Adult and intelligent, the world of *The Witcher* is as fascinating as it is violent and corrupt. With an epic story that pushes you into moral dilemmas, this RPG came out of nowhere to revive an ailing genre.



**DEUS EX**  
PCZ Issue: 93 – 94%  
This is the benchmark in RPGs – if not gaming. A twisting plot, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama ensure *Deus Ex* remains the alpha male of the PC gaming world.

## STEVE'S PICK



**GARRY'S MOD**  
PCZ Issue 179 – 88%  
If you want to play *Garry's Mod* on some of the game's more interesting servers (the Goonie Goon Game servers are where you'll find the most amazing contraptions, in my opinion) you'll have to download about 4GB worth of content. This includes basic building blocks (something missing from the cache of *Source*-engine models shipped with *Garry's Mod*) as well as things like gears (which work as they should), railings along which spheres can roll, bits of jet planes and other very specifically useful objects.  
You'll also be downloading maps. One of which turns *Garry's Mod* into a space-combat arena, replete with planets you can fly between and explore, some with inhospitable atmospheres, others covered in ice, and all capable of being built on. See if you can construct a spacecraft that can not only deliver you safely to the planet surfaces, but also protect you from the horror-vacuum of space. Or, if you're rubbish at building, simply watch other players carefully and purposefully bolting their inventions together. It's a relaxing pursuit.  
Guides (and a way of easily downloading that broad range of crap you'll need before you can play online) can be found at [ggg.bottlabs.org](http://ggg.bottlabs.org) – though if you can't be bothered with any of that, I implore you to just play about offline with the default gubbins. Even if it's all you can do to put Alyx in sexy poses.

## RICHARD'S PICK



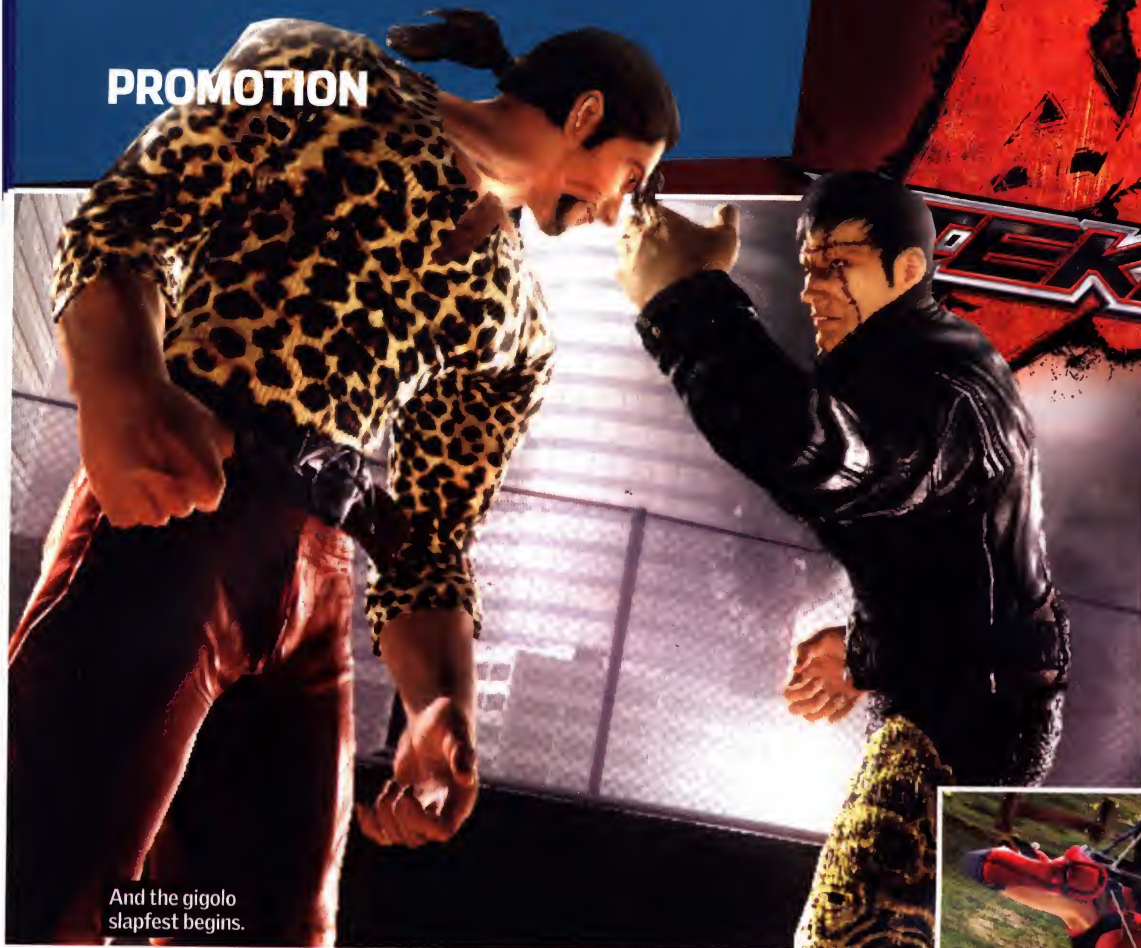
**THE WITCHER**  
PCZ Issue 188 – 88%  
Being an old-time P&P RPGer – the kind which involves rolling funny shaped dice and talking to real-life people in person – I've always enjoyed CRPGs. But none have met my expectations since *Baldur's Gate II*. That is until *The Witcher* arrived.  
This game from then-unknown CD Projekt was plainly stunning: based on Andrzej Sapkowski's original reworkings of fairy tales and standard Tolkien tropes, this game featured intense tactical combat, drugs, sex, and – most importantly – a damn good story.  
*The Witcher's* setting is a world where morality is a complex, shifting mass that lacks any clear definitions of good and evil. This is a world where an antihero is the good guy by default. By forcing you to choose between taking the side of medieval Nazis, literally inhuman terrorists, or staying out of the conflict and allowing a civil war to break out, *The Witcher* forces you to consider your actions and their effects. And not just on the wider world – each choice you're offered has a personal consequence for you in the game: help a ally later on; choose the wrong lover, and you make an enemy.  
And boy, were there a lot of women. In various states of nakedness. As well as threesomes with eager nurses. Yes, *The Witcher* is a truly great game.

INCOMING!

Want to know what's coming out? Then turn to page 20 for the full run-down.



## PROMOTION



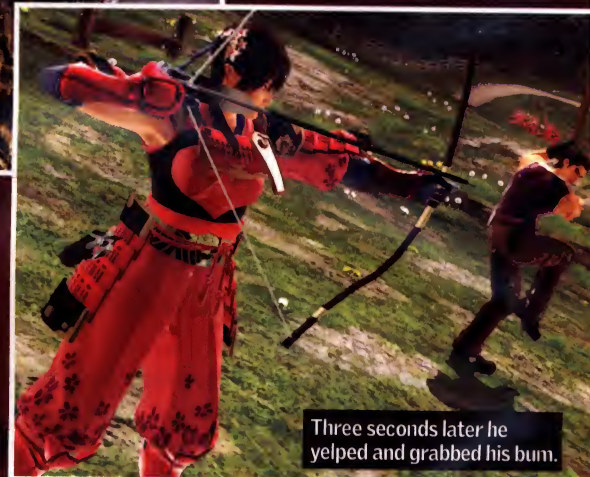
Watch out for that Joey's right hook lass.

And the gigolo slapfest begins.

# FISTICUFFS

Everyone's favourite fighting game has gone global! Get ready to take on the world!

**FORMAT** PS3, PSP, Xbox 360 **PUBLISHER** Namco Bandai Games **DEVELOPER** Namco Bandai Games  
**WEBSITE** tekken6-official.eu **PLAYERS** 1-2 **ONLINE OPTIONS** Versus, Co-op, Title Lounge, Data Upload  
**ETA** Out now (PS3, Xbox 360), December (PSP)



Three seconds later he yelped and grabbed his bum.

**W**ITH OVER 34 million copies of *Tekken* sold in the past 14 years, there's no denying its enduring popularity and the passion of its fanbase.

So what's new in *Tekken 6*? Well, apart from a stunning all-new hi-def makeover, there are 40 playable characters to master – the biggest

*Tekken* line-up yet – including six brand-new faces like Alisa, a cute girly cyborg with a built-in jetpack, who can detach her head to use as a bomb. Innovations continue with the all-new Scenario Campaign mode where two players can battle together against enemies waves in a free-roaming level-based brawler.

Now with full online functionality, the whole world can get together to duke it out for *Tekken* supremacy over the PlayStation Network and Xbox Live. Online modes include Ranked Matches where you can take on players of a similar ability and Data Upload which allows you to upload a customized character that replicates your playing style. Now anyone in the world can download your ghost to

take on your fighter even when you're not online!

Finally, *Tekken 6 Title Lounge* is a PlayStation Home exclusive where players can win unique costume pieces and furniture, and meet other fans to chat or challenge to matches. **PCZ**



Chain chainsaw attack.



Watch out – those octogons are lethal.

**"With full online functionality, the whole world can get together to duke it out for *Tekken* supremacy"**

## TWITTER TEKKEN



In *Tekken Talk* – the first real-time fighting game for Twitter – players pick one of 10 characters to battle it out in the heats, before the top 32 players go through to the finals. Each game is designed to run for around five hours and players can embed widgets on their social network profiles to track of their progress.

Find out more at [whatwillyoufightfor.com](http://whatwillyoufightfor.com)





# PCZONE Hardware

Better gaming through technology

## A RIGHT STATE

**I**'VE BEEN TESTING solid state drives for some months now, and can say without shadow of a doubt that they've done more to change the way I play games than any recent CPU or GPU.

That's a pretty bold claim, but it's easy to forget that hard drives have been the PC's weakest link for years, and even today's fastest spinning units can output much less data than the wires connected to can transmit. One thing's for sure though, HDD tech is time-tested and SSD is not.

Look at Intel. Their last firmware update for their premium X25 range offered a 40% performance boost, but just so happened to mess up your files. The earlier update locked people out of their data, and the update before that caused long-term performance degradation.

Then there's OCZ, masters of confusion and disorder. Over 1,200 words of confusing waffle accompany their most recent update, warning me that I must downgrade my beta firmware to version 1.1, then install version 1.3 again, so that the version 1.41 patch will work.

Anything else? Of course: there were now four downloads to choose between, because certain drives were given the wrong name at the factory and need to be treated separately. It all feels terribly amateurish.

SSDs do remain superior in almost every way. But right now only those of you with patience will be able to appreciate them.

*Handy*

**Phil Wand**  
Hardware editor

**WARNING:  
THIS MONTH'S  
HARD WORDS**  
BY RICHARD COSGROVE

## RECESSION BUSTER

Budget AMD processor makes the Intel alternative seem poor value

**A**MD'S NEW ATHLON II X3 435 processor costs just £65, yet it turns out benchmark numbers just as impressive as its more expensive Intel rival.

This means you can take any £49 Socket AM3 motherboard, £34 spent on DDR3 RAM, a £129 Radeon HD 4870 and £29 on any half-decent hard drive, and for just £306 you have the nuts and bolts of a gaming PC that'll prove as smooth as a system built around Intel's E7500 – until now the default choice for those of you on a budget.

While the E5x00 and E6x00 Pentium dual core range can be had for the same money, the faster running X3 chip (essentially an X4 with one of the cores switched off) produces better scores for gamers.

Intel devotees will be swift to point out that the Core and Pentium chips used for comparison are yesterday's technology. True, but there's no getting away from the fact that the new triple-

Want a gaming rig for about £300? Then take a look at an Athlon.



core Athlon allows you to build a faster machine for less money. This is an area in which the Californian company has traditionally excelled, and it's great to see them back on form.  
[amd.com](http://amd.com)

## USB HERE ASUS makes USB 3.0 a reality

ASUS'S NEW XTREME Design P7P55D and P7P55D-E Series motherboards are the world's first to feature USB 3.0 and SATA 6Gbps, despite the Intel P55 chipset on

which they're based not supporting either standard.

The board maker is using an onboard expansion bridge on the P7P55D-E and an add-in card on the P7P55D to double the bandwidth of their PCI-Express interfaces. ASUS claim that as well as increasing the speed of USB tenfold, hard disk read and write speeds are boosted by 50%.

The motherboards also have real-time overclocking and automatic performance tuning features, together with a full suite of Windows 7 drivers.  
[uk.asus.com](http://uk.asus.com)



## NEWS ROUND-UP

**AMD'S MUCH TALKED** about dual-GPU Radeon is real. The card is called HD 5970 after AMD dropped the X2 label. Maybe this is because multi-processor products will be so common they'll no longer need identifying. We've reviewed this once-phantom card on page 94.  
[game.amd.com](http://game.amd.com)

**CONSOLE BASHERS AMONG** you will be enthralled to hear that the Wii bubble has burst, with Nintendo sales on a downer. But most people bought their Wii as a family toy so we're unlikely to see a rush to buy Windows PCs. That money will go into the next fad instead.  
[nintendo.com](http://nintendo.com)

**IN LAST ISSUE'S** reviews of the Advantec Fei-Dao and Cyberpower Infinity i5 Achilles, the PCs' final scores were accidentally transposed. The Advantec really scored 82% and the Cyberpower 92%. We're sorry for any confusion caused.

**CALIFORNIA:** An over-polluted and skint state in the USA ruled by an ex-cyborg assassin where ASUS are based. Not to be confused with Canada, which is full of lovely people and where ASUS aren't based. **EYEFINITY:** The term to describe when you feel right at home with what you see: "I have a real eyefinity with those graphics." **FN:** Abbreviation of "fun". A button on some keyboards that makes keys do different things, which are sometimes entertaining (but mostly aren't). **LINUX:** A free operating system used by people who miss writing programs in machine code on 8-bit home computers that have 64KB of memory and use C60 audio tapes for storage.





# Dear Wandy

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...

## PROBLEMS?

Mistook your wardrobe for the toilet again? Local shop stopped stocking your favourite blue-flavoured Pringles? Been playing *World of Warcraft* so long your partner's left you? We can't help with those setbacks (no, not even the Mighty Wandy), but we can solve all your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything, and he's willing to help if you email him at: [wandy@dearwandy.com](mailto:wandy@dearwandy.com), including as much information about your problem as you can and system specs where applicable.

## Q BOOKWORM NOTEBOOK

I've been subscribing for a couple of years now and have always enjoyed the Hardware section, despite being pretty useless at that sort of thing.

I've been thinking of getting a new laptop as my current one is dying in new and interesting ways. It's also pretty bad, in that it can barely play any game released after 2004.

Trying to find a decent quality one in my budget is tricky. I'm looking for something that'll be able to play more modern games, like *Dawn of War II*, *Fallout 3*, and *Empire: Total War*, but within a budget of £500-£600.

James Crussell

Anything that describes itself as a 'gaming laptop' is best avoided, as it'll be beyond the reach of ordinary wallets. It'll also be too big, too heavy, and will go from fully charged to flat battery in the time it takes to load Windows. Having said that, those

of you with pots of cash and a desire to replace the sprawling mess that is your desktop PC with something tidy, portable and of equal power will find the choice rather mouthwatering.

Back to your quest. My advice would be to narrow your choice to a Core 2 Duo machine with a 17in display, 2GB RAM, a recent Radeon or GeForce card, and a 250GB or larger hard drive. Stick with a brand you know or buy from a high street store and be prepared to replace it within three to four years – if your current machine is older it's lasted well.

My picks are the Toshiba Satellite Pro P300-28L; MEDION Akoya P7610; HP Pavilion dv6-1216sa; and the Acer Aspire 5739G-654G32Mn.

The Tosh is available online for £575 or thereabouts. It's nothing to look at

but has a Core 2 Duo T5870 chip, a large, bright screen, plus 256MB Mobility Radeon HD 3470. This GPU isn't going to set the world on fire but it should give you the step up you need.

At £499, the MEDION can be found at Argos stores and features a 512MB GeForce 9500M GS, 320GB drive and 3GB RAM. While the T3400 and 9500M won't allow you to turn up the wick all the way, they do enable the machine to pass muster in many modern games.

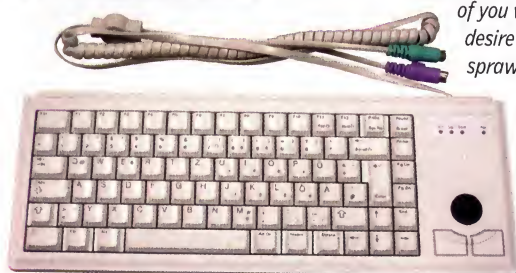
The HP is billed as an 'Entertainment Notebook' and has AMD's RM-74 Turion bolted down inside it. Just £495 buys you a great deal more than that posh badge: the Pavilion has 4GB RAM, 320GB disk, and a Mobility Radeon HD 4530. Do not be dissuaded by the Turion

as it should be capable of turning out benchmark scores somewhere between the T3400 in the MEDION machine and the T5870 in the Tosh. The only obvious downside is that it ties with the Acer for smallest display resolution.

Speaking of which, Acer's £599 Aspire is a T6500-powered system with 4GB RAM, 320GB hard drive and 1GB GeForce GT 130M GPU – easily the most capable card here. Like the HP, the screen resolution is 1366x768 but the GeForce more than makes up for the



PS/2 keyboards are old, but have their uses.



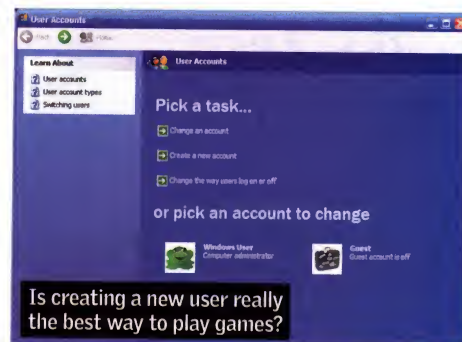
## DRIVER WATCH

### GRAPHICS

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 9.9	11 Sep 09
NVIDIA	Force Ware 191.07	5 Oct 09

### SOUND

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	X-Fi Beta 2.18.0004	30 Jul 08
Creative	Creative Alchemy 1.20.04	01 Aug 08
Creative	Audigy Beta 2.18.0001	17 Jul 08





## "Anything that describes itself as a 'gaming laptop' is best avoided, as it'll be beyond the reach of ordinary wallets"

pixel deficit and should be able to run the widest selection of games.

My choice? Probably the Acer.

### Q DEDICATED TO GAMES

I really need to set up a dedicated gaming profile in Windows XP. If you can point me to the relevant web page – I've trawled through a lot of crap – it would be greatly appreciated.

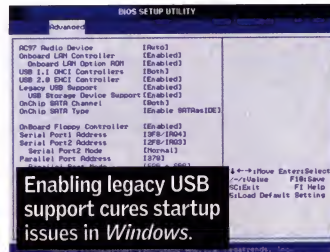
Chris Balfie

**A** There are two ways of going about this. The first and most effective option is to bolt in a new hard drive and install Windows clean and fresh. The second is to open the User Accounts control panel, create a new user, log out and back in again, then start stripping that user's configuration back to the operating system's nuts and bolts. But there are downsides.

The problem with the first route is that it's not as straightforward as you might think. Installing Windows takes time, effort and endless patches, and a new drive is going to cost you. A cheaper way might be to split your existing C: in two partitions, but because XP can't do that job natively you'll need Parted Magic from partedmagic.com. While this utility is free, it's Linux-based and quirky.

The problem with the second option is that it only makes short-term sense. Having created your new user and logged in, a number of system tray utilities such as your anti-virus program will already be running. You'll also find that, should you want to experiment with video drivers or GPU overclocking tools, anything you break in one account will affect everyone.

**"Any company selling a mobo with PS/2 connection seems rather daft to me"**



Enabling legacy USB support cures startup issues in Windows.

So forget the idea of user accounts, and go for the option that requires a small initial investment but which makes most sense over the long term: get a new hard drive, whip out your Windows setup CD and get installing. Don't install anti-virus or anti-spyware programs, stop unnecessary services, don't check your email and don't browse the web with this account, and you'll always be good to game.

### Q LEAVING A LEGACY

I've been a subscriber since the first issue of ZONE. I'm now 80 years old and still enjoying the magazine.

But am I missing something, or is it all the rest of you? I'm referring to the Hardware News from issue 212. In the final paragraph you mention a "curious return to legacy keyboard and mouse ports".

I couldn't buy a mobo without these available! I've invested in a wireless USB keyboard and mouse which have proved helpful in desk management. But if one is unable to boot Windows XP, a USB keyboard can't be used to control recovery utilities when Windows isn't there.

After considerable trouble over this I eventually discovered why I couldn't get any response. I now have in reserve

## ALL ABOUT...

### 22 EYEFINITY

Those of you with two or more screens will understand how multiple monitors can add a whole new dimension to software that supports them.

Titles such as *Supreme Commander* and *Flight Simulator X* allow you to rearrange in-game windows and interface elements across more than one panel, thus freeing up room on the main display.

ATI Eyefinity technology, available on the Radeon HD 5770 and Radeon HD 5750, supports up to six displays arranged individually or in groups. All you need is a game that supports non-standard aspect ratios, and the image can be spanned across a large bank of monitors.

The 5770 and 5750 support a total of three video outputs each in both Windows and in games, so CrossFire is required to create the biggest bank possible – six screens. It'll be expensive, but flight simulators and driving games will seem even more realistic than ever before, the physical size of the total display area making objects on it near life-sized.

It's not just about simulations though. AMD have been using *Left 4 Dead* to demo their new technology, and it's become clear just how much a difference it makes to first-person shooters. In fact, it's like being there.



Or you could get a really big TV instead.

an old keyboard and mouse which I have to fish out and plug in to so-called "legacy" ports.

I hope you are going to tell me that I'm wrong and you will show me the magical answer. Surely other persons must have been caught out by this?

Derek

**A** Anyone who has owned PCs both before and after the arrival of USB ports will have run into the problem you describe, and plenty more besides.

However, the behaviour of USB peripherals in environments which have neither hot plug support, nor drivers for them, will vary from machine to machine. Almost every motherboard since 2004 will have a Legacy USB support option somewhere in the BIOS which, when enabled, allows you to use

USB products outside Windows by handling them internally.

You didn't mention how old your system is, but if you purchased it within the last two to three years I'd be surprised if simply turning on legacy support in the BIOS wouldn't fix all of your problems.

Having said that, it's possible that legacy support only affects certain USB stacks, so if you're still stuck try plugging in to different connectors on both the back and front of your case, and, if you have a powered hub, try plugging in through that too.

So you see, any company selling a motherboard with PS/2 connections, almost 10 years after USB gained widespread support, seems rather daft to me. Perhaps they'll bring back parallel printer ports and serial modems next year. **PCZ**

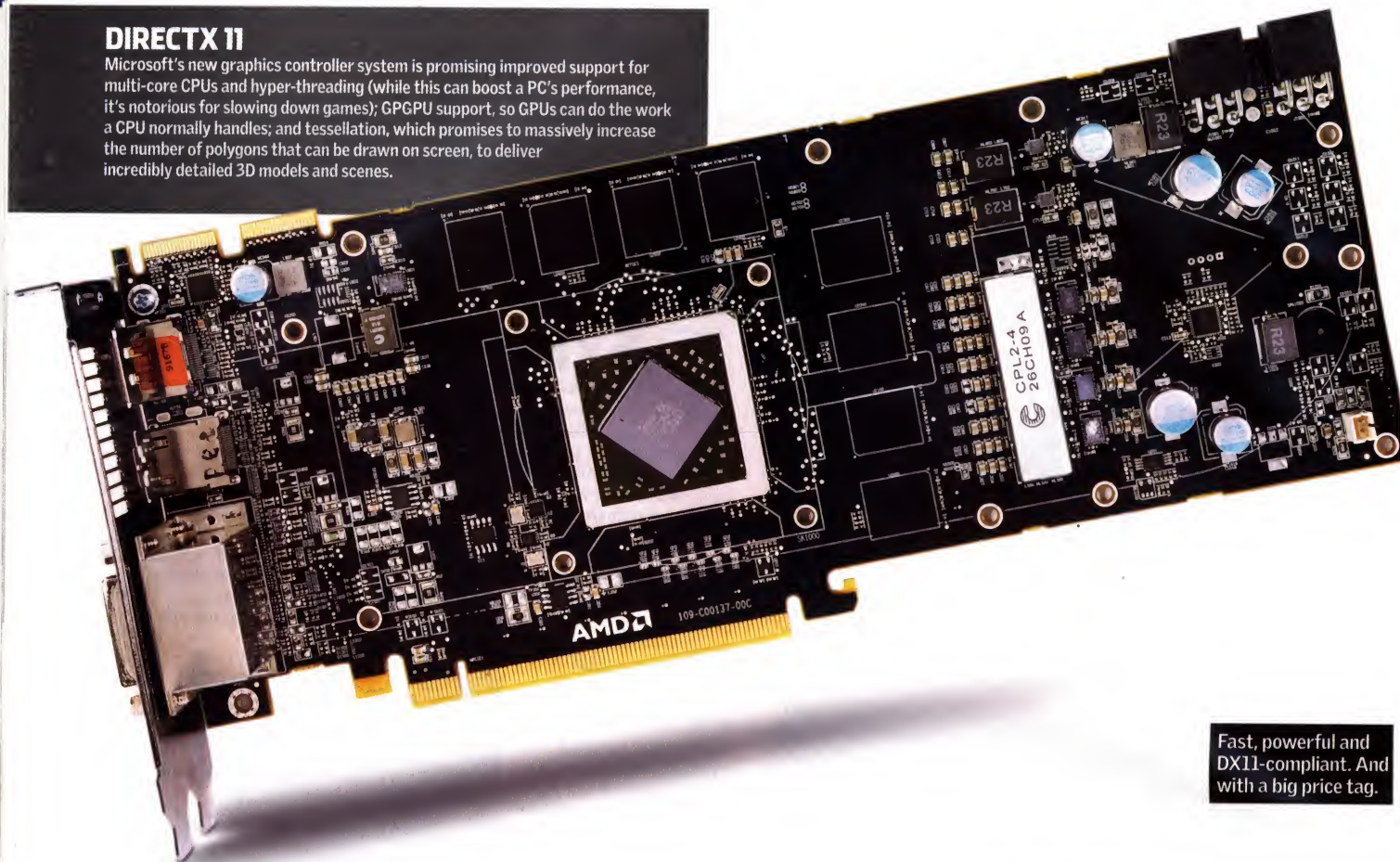
**FORUMS:**  
DIRECT FROM  
DEARWANDY.COM

(The Gidfather) I'm looking to get a wireless keyboard and mouse. Can someone point me in the right direction? A previous wireless mouse gave me terrible lag from as little as 2ft away. (Wandy) The DiNovo Edge keyboard I had for MCE and games in my lounge was rubbish. The touchpad is both crap for games and circular, meaning I was always lifting off to get to the edges of the display. The integrated scrollers are a nice idea but erratic. Crucially, the media buttons require you to hold down a Fn key to access them, there's no Fn key lock, no skip buttons, no MCE green button, and all for £100. Forget it. What you want is the Microsoft Wireless Entertainment Desktop: [snipurl.com/mcekeyboard](http://snipurl.com/mcekeyboard).



## DIRECTX 11

Microsoft's new graphics controller system is promising improved support for multi-core CPUs and hyper-threading (while this can boost a PC's performance, it's notorious for slowing down games); GPGPU support, so GPUs can do the work a CPU normally handles; and tessellation, which promises to massively increase the number of polygons that can be drawn on screen, to deliver incredibly detailed 3D models and scenes.



Fast, powerful and DX11-compliant. And with a big price tag.

# AMD RADEON HD 5870

PRICE £300 MANUFACTURER AMD WEBSITE [amd.com](http://amd.com)

**THE 5870 GPU** isn't just the fastest graphics chip ever, but it's the most powerful GPU we've seen. And it's the first to support DirectX 11.

In terms of design philosophy AMD took a similar approach to the HD 4800 series: keep each constituent part small and efficient, and have lots of them. With this card AMD switched from 55nm silicon production to 40nm. This isn't an academic change, as it means more transistors – and so more performance and features – can be

packed into the processor. Added to that, the 5870's chip is 25% larger than the 4800 series' RV770, means its transistor count has nearly doubled from 956 million to 2.15 billion.

Unfortunately, the doubling doesn't apply to the chip's memory bus, which remains 256-bit. But with the GDDR5 RAM clocking in at 1.2GHz the memory bandwidth increases by a third from 4800s, from 115GBps to 154GBps. And the GPU's clock speed is 850MHz, which pars with the powerful 4890.

Make no mistake: this GPU is a monster.

As if that weren't enough, the 5800 series' GPU is the first DirectX 11-compliant graphics chip. This provides

**"The Radeon HD 5780 is the fastest graphics card available, but you will pay for that power"**

improved support for multi-core CPUs, a compute shader for general-purpose processing (so it can help the CPU with its regular tasks), and tessellation. The latter will translate to highly detailed geometry and polygons in games.

Elsewhere, the usual slew of detail tweaks have been made. This is the first graphics system capable of perfect, angle-independent anisotropic filtering. And AMD claims that it delivers 8x anti-aliasing with a minimal performance hit, so it cranks out the highest quality pixels that have ever been produced.

As proof of this, during our tests the 5780 was the first card to break the 30fps barrier in *Crysis Warhead*, with every graphics option set at max. What's more, when running at full pelt it used 30W less power than a GTX 285.

Now these remarkable benchmarks were achieved running DX10 games. If the developers ported these titles to DX11, the 5870 could deliver a 25-30% performance boost.

The Radeon HD 5780 is the fastest graphics card available, but you will pay for that power. Time will bring the card's price down, especially when NVIDIA release their own DX11 card. **JL**

## BENCHMARKS

FPS @ 1680X1050

	RADEON HD 5870	RADEON HD 4890	GEFORCE GTX 285
Crysis Warhead <sup>(1)</sup>	38	30	28
Far Cry 2 <sup>(2)</sup>	76	53	58
Far Cry 2 <sup>(3)</sup>	32	11	27
World in Conflict <sup>(2)</sup>	56	49	53
1 No anti-aliasing, 2 4x anti-aliasing, 3 8x anti-aliasing			

## SPECIFICATION

CORE CLOCK	850MHz
MEMORY CLOCK	4.8GHz
MEMORY	1GB

PCZONE

85

DirectX heaven





# NOVATECH ELITE PRO

PRICE £1,080 MANUFACTURER Novatech WEBSITE novatech.co.uk

**NOVATECH'S NEW CORE i5** gaming PC machine features a Blu-ray optical drive and DVD drive, and a stock-clocked CPU with a standard Intel cooler. Unusually, it's equipped with two different graphics cards in SLI.

The NVIDIA GTX 275 delivers most of this machine's graphics power. It's an excellent choice of card for a gaming machine – or was until the GeForce 5870's recent arrival. The 9800 GT is really there for general graphics work, and to provide PhysX capabilities to games that need it. While PhysX makes games a bit prettier, it doesn't really add much, so the money this card cost would've been better spent on more memory or another GTX 275.

## SPECIFICATION

CPU	2.66GHz Core i5 750
MOTHERBOARD	ASUS P7P55D
GPU	NVIDIA GTX 275 896MB, 9800 GT 1GB
RAM	4GB DDR3 1600MHz
STORAGE	1TB HDD
OS	Vista 64-bit

## BENCHMARKS

### FPS @ 1680X1050

ArmA II	16
Far Cry 2	53
World in Conflict	46

Despite this, the *Far Cry 2* and *World in Conflict* benchmarks (which focus on a GPU's abilities, not the CPU's) are very good.

The Elite Pro once again proves the overclocking prowess of the Core i5 too. Even with the standard Intel cooler we came close to pushing the CPU to 3.6GHz.

While the Elite Pro is a good system, it doesn't offer the value for money of the CyberPower Infinity i5 Achilles (issue 214). And while it beats the Advantec Fei-Dao (issue 214) in terms of graphics power, we'd rather have that PC's solid-state boot drive over the Elite Pro's irrelevant extra GPU. **DJ**

**PCZONE**  
**82**



# PC SPECIALIST VORTEX 860GTX

PRICE £999 MANUFACTURER PC Specialist WEBSITE pcspecialist.co.uk

**WE'VE SEEN A** few machines recently using Intel's new Core i5 CPUs, but this is the first to be fitted with the reasonably-priced Core i7 based on the Core i5's Nehalem architecture. In essence this PC uses a Core i5 that's equipped with hyper-threading.

As the Core i7 870 is ridiculously priced and the Core i5 750 lacks hyper-threading, the 860 is the Core i7 that makes sense, coming in at 2.8GHz and overclockable to the 870's 2.94GHz on all four cores.

As for the rest of its specs, the Vortex 860GTX looks great. The 8GB 1600MHz Corsair RAM and a 1TB HDD means it should please

## BENCHMARKS

### FPS @ 1680X1050

ArmA II	13
Far Cry 2	50

for a few years. Plus the 860 CPU is paired with an NVIDIA GeForce GTX 275 which, like the ATI Radeon 4890, is the smart choice price-wise.

As you'd expect, the eight threads of the Core i7 make light work of CPU-intensive tasks such as rendering and video encoding. But this machine doesn't cut it as a gamer's PC, with it being outperformed by the Elite Pro, despite it using superior components.

Indeed, we increased *ArmA II*'s framerate by disabling hyper-threading, and switching back to the four real cores. Hopefully, DX11's promise of improved gaming performance across multiple threads will fix this problem, but right now if you're a gamer, the simpler Core i5 is still the chip to get. **DJ**

## SPECIFICATION

CPU	2.8GHz Core i7 860
MOTHERBOARD	ASUS P7P55D Pro
GPU NVIDIA	GTX 275
RAM	8GB Corsair 1600MHz
STORAGE	1TB SATA II
OS	Vista Home Premium + Windows 7 upgrade

**PCZONE**  
**72**



**REMEMBER:**  
IF IT DOESN'T GO  
IN DON'T TRY TO  
FORCE IT IN

In today's PCs plugs and sockets are designed to be idiot-proof, only allowing plugs to be inserted one way – the right way. So if you're try to push in an IDE cable, a PCI card, or a USB drive and it doesn't go in easily, you're not doing it correctly.

# Hardware Buyer

This is our favourite PC gear – both expensive and cheap

## LOADED?

### GRAPHICS

#### ZOTAC GEFORCE GTX 295

PRICE £436

zotac.com

The current king of the hill is this giant dual-GPU board from NVIDIA. That ridiculously large heatsink covers two 280 chips running side-by-side. And it's not just faster than AMD's 4870X2 (its nearest rival), but it's also a lot more energy efficient. Good news, as the 4870X2 is currently propping up the share prices of several major electricity companies.



### PROCESSOR

#### INTEL CORE I7 965

PRICE £839

intel.com



Intel's latest processing powerhouse doesn't just have four cores with which to throw your games around, it also support hyperthreading for running even more simultaneous processes without affecting framerates. The upshot: there's not a game in the world that this will struggle with.

### SCREEN

#### NEC 24WMGX3

PRICE £529

onec.com



If we had the money we'd fritter it on this incredible 27in screen from NEC. Picture quality is simply unrivalled, and it's got so many input options it's the subject of at least three web fetish sites. Size queens will always go for something larger, and that would be lavishly decadent too.

### MOTHERBOARD

#### ASUS RAMPAGE II EXTREME

PRICE £321

asus.com



This Core i7-friendly board sports the X58 Intel chipset and everything else you can imagine. It's the deluxe department store of motherboard design, hawking bespoke capacitor design and expertly tuned performance pathways, to the sleazy suburban joys of three-way SLI.

### SOUNDCARD

#### AUZENTECH X-FI PRELUDE 7.1

PRICE £144

auzentech.com



Take a top-of-the-range Creative X-Fi audio chip and surround it with components of such a high grade they're spoken of only in hushed tones by those in the know, and then add Dolby Digital Live – you'd have a pretty cool sound card, right? Actually, you'd end up with this one.

### HDD

#### SEAGATE BARRACUDA 7200.11

PRICE £99

seagate.com



If we're talking money no object, then we'd couple this with a solid-state drive from Samsung for maximum performance and storage, but if our loaded rig was limited to one hard disk, it would be this one. A huge 1.3TB of storage and a performance unmatched by any other vanilla HDD.

### SPEAKERS

#### LOGITECH Z-5500

PRICE £195

logitech.co.uk



The price has dropped below £200 and these speakers are simply the best we've ever tested. The soundtracks from both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself dusting off your old CDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

## SKINT?

### GRAPHICS

#### SAPPHIRE HD4850

PRICE £120

sapphiretech.com

This is the card that had arch-rival NVIDIA slashing prices in an effort to be competitive. Just £120 buys you a mainstream monster with performance that matches a GeForce 9800 GTX and snaps at the heels of the new N280GTX. Put the magazine down and buy one.



### PROCESSOR

#### INTEL CORE 2 DUO E2180

PRICE £44

intel.com



At the budget end of things, it's a tough choice between the E2180, E4500 and E8200 processors from Intel. It's not surprising that things get faster the more you pay, but the E2180 here is a flexible engine that's great for gentle gaming or an overclocking frenzy.

### MOTHERBOARD

#### ASROCK CONROEXFIRE-ESATA2

PRICE £60

asrock.com



Paired with an E6300, this ASRock motherboard can wring high-end performance from a budget rig. It features a 1066/800/533MHz FSB, SATA II with RAID, 7.1 HD audio onboard, CrossFire support, Gigabit LAN and ASRock's easy overclocking features.

### HDD

#### WESTERN DIGITAL CAVIAR 1600AAJS

PRICE £30

wdc.com



A 160GB hard drive, like this SATA 2 model, remains more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, Steam, a couple of thousand music files and the odd porn flick still leaves plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

### SCREEN

#### VIEWSONIC VA903M

PRICE £118

viewsoniceurope.com



The VA903m is a better bet than any of the similarly-priced widescreen variants as there are more pixels on its 19in screen: its 1280 x 1024 pixel panel offers greater depth than the standard 1440 x 900 panels of its peers, although it can't handle native widescreen resolutions.

### SOUNDCARD

#### CREATIVE LABS SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

PRICE £20

uk.europe.creative.com



The cheap Audigy card features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support. This card makes an awful lot of sense for casual gamers, as there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard, unless you're an audiophile, or you want your PC to act as a top-class music system.

### SPEAKERS

#### LOGITECH X-530

PRICE £55

logitech.co.uk



Logitech's X-530s have the edge on quality and are available just about everywhere. This Swiss-designed 70W, 5.1 surround sound system offers Logitech build quality with superb sound in games, movies and music. And their value can't be beat, giving sound quality above their price bracket.



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PCZONE

# Freeplay

For the man who has nothing

## SISTER MORPHINE

**Y**OU WEREN'T EXPECTING to see me back here, were you? You were too busy preparing yourself for another eyeful of Marco, admit it. Tough, I'm back, crutches in hand and extremely loud metal playing through my speakers. I'm sure everyone at Zone Towers is loving me being back. Steve seems to be spending a lot of time whittling a sharpened piece of wood, I'm not sure why. It must be a present.

You'd think spending weeks on end just doing nothing would be fantastic. Well, it isn't. Yes, I got the chance to plough through a number of games that I probably wouldn't have done otherwise, but the novelty value does tend to wear thin when your only trips outside your front door are to the GP and the local hospital.

MRI scans are very scary, you know. Far scarier than last issue's Most Scariest Game winner, *Condemned*. I never wanted to press the panic button when playing that, but I had to close my eyes and mentally hum a Rancid song to keep myself from panicking too much, when inside that metal tube.

I'm back now, though, relatively fresh and just glad to be out of the house once again. There's a whole bunch of free stuff to feast your eyes on this month. Hmm, I just realised I could have linked this section in with my being freed from the shackles of injury. Ah well, maybe next time.

Now head into the ever-expanding Freeware section. I'll point out our huge *GTR2* modding feature. It really is rather interesting.

David Brown  
Staff writer

*Doom 3's engine makes things look booty-ful.*



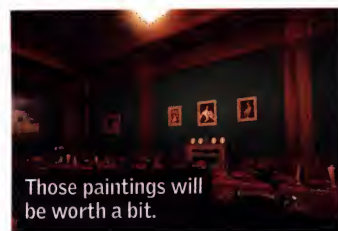
## DARKNESS FALLS

After half a decade, *The Dark Mod* finally arrives

WEBSITE [thedarkmod.com](http://thedarkmod.com)

**W**ORD OF WARNING before we start actually talking about *The Dark Mod*, the very long-awaited *Doom 3* mod that replaces Imps and Pig Demons with purses and water arrows: it's a bugger to install.

While we're not talking about needing a Wandy level of PC know-how, you'll still have to be relatively savvy with the inner workings of your file system to get it all up and running. You're also going to need a clean install of *Doom 3* with the latest patches. For full instructions, get yourself over to *The Dark Mod's* website or visit



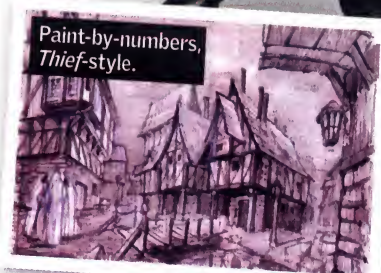
Those paintings will be worth a bit.

the mod's wiki page at [snipurl.com/darkmodinstall](http://snipurl.com/darkmodinstall).

As for the mod itself, after five years or so of development, you kind of get the feeling it has missed the boat somewhat. Certainly, the fuss made about it way back when has dissipated into more of a "Oh, they still making that then?" reaction from most quarters. However, if you are still interested – and still have a copy of *Doom 3* handy – it's more of a *Thief* game than *Deadly Shadows* (the last game in the series) was. Who knows, maybe it'll be more of a *Thief* game than the forthcoming *Thief 4*.

There aren't many missions available at the moment (downloadable from [mindplaces.com/darkmod](http://mindplaces.com/darkmod)) but the ones that are should offer enough of a challenge to experienced thieves.

Interesting new tweaks to the gameplay include a new sound-based lockpicking mini-game and an attempt at



Paint-by-numbers, Thief-style.

swordfighting that'll make you even more likely to reload once you've been identified as a taffer.

Even after five years of work though, there are still bugs aplenty. Enemies often respond in unintelligent fashion and many of the more precision-related gameplay elements are rather more hit and miss than we'd like. People that have been waiting for so long for this mod will almost certainly be willing to overlook some of the dumber moments because they're just happy enough to have, effectively, new *Thief* maps to play in a prettier engine.

More maps should emerge soon enough, depending on the interest taken in this by the *Thief* and *Doom 3* modding community. Certainly, it's worth giving it a shot if you loved the first two *Thief* games, if only to see whether your footsteps on cobbled stones still sound as alarmingly loud.



PCZONE  
FREE-O-METER



Not free!

0  
HOURS

\*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



Free!

890  
HOURS\*



## SNIPPETS



### ANADIN EXTRA

Everything seems to be coming up *Painkiller* at the moment. There's that *Dreamkiller* game and now a demo (the full game should be out at the time of going to press) of the newest entry into the stake-firing FPS franchise.  
[snipurl.com/paindemo](http://snipurl.com/paindemo)



### HOGARTY'S INFLUENCE

Far be it from us to suggest that Steve's art style is influential throughout the world, but the website of the creator of giant-laser-eyes-creature-stomp-'em-up game *Crush!* has a familiar feel to it.  
[snipurl.com/crushgame](http://snipurl.com/crushgame)



### EXPANDED DLC

Recently there was a *Killing Floor* free weekend on *Steam*. Just as recently, there was a slew of new stuff released for the game, like a new monster, three new maps, and seven new weapons.  
[snipurl.com/killingdlc](http://snipurl.com/killingdlc)



Thrills! Spills!

# SIMMING THE UN-SIMABLE

Excitement levels at overload for demolition demo

WEBSITE [snipurl.com/demosimdemo](http://snipurl.com/demosimdemo)

**W**HAT HAVE I done to deserve this? I leave the office for a mere month and a half and what is the first thing I have to write about when I get back? Yes, a wonderfully free demo of *Demolition Simulator* (or *Spreng- Und Abriss-Simulator 2009*).

That's right, prepare to enter the exciting world of professional building destruction, courtesy of the same company who brought us the thrill rides that were *Bus Simulator* and *Forklift Truck Simulator*, which, don't forget, comes "mit original-fahrzeugen". Oh, you might want to put a few mental exclamation marks at the end of that bit.

All sarcasm aside, there's obviously a market for this nonsense, so why not see whether you could cut it in the wrecking ball game (although you'll have to pay to get access to said destructive sphere) with this demo.



You have to pay to use that.

In it, you can expect to put your powers to the test against the forces of God, as your first task is to bulldoze a church until all that is left is the basement full of sexual torture devices. We can just imagine the hate

campaign already being put together by the Vatican over this. To save that bother, let's assume it was a Church of Satan. If you look closely, you can see a picture of Anton LaVey inside the wreckage. Or is that Kane?

## SQUASHING PEDESTRIANS

Remedy release ancient top-down racer for free

WEBSITE [remedygames.com/games/death\\_rally.html](http://remedygames.com/games/death_rally.html)



**T**AKING A BREAK from the trials and tribulations of one Mr Alan Wake, Remedy have decided to placate their fans a little by re-releasing their very first game for free.

For those unfamiliar with *Death Rally* it's basically a *Micro Machines* rip-off with guns and the ability to run over the race's spectators. Machine guns can pepper the boots of enemy cars, mines and other obstacles litter the road and the spectators fail spectacularly to protect their own lives.

Sadly, there isn't an online multiplayer mode because too much work would be needed to change all the code to use modern IP and LAN communications. Let's face it – would you rather they got on with *Alan Wake* or spent a few months adding multiplayer to *Death Rally*?

One more amusing little note about the game: one of the AI racers is one Duke Nukem. We're surprised this game hasn't therefore been re-branded *Duke Nukem Extreme Championship Racing Forever* and had a £20 price tag slapped on it... or are we just too cynical nowadays?



# FLASH! A-AH! SAVIOUR OF THE UNIVERSE!

EA bring 2D to *Dragon Age* with *Journeys*

WEBSITE [dragonagejourneys.com](http://dragonagejourneys.com)

Evil and fire  
always go  
together.

**W**HEN WE FIRST heard about the 2D Flash-based prequel to *Dragon Age: Origins*, we were, to say the least, sceptical. Usually, these tie-ins are atrocious, repetitive exercises in boredom that have just been cobbled together in five minutes under the instructions of a besuited marketing ponce. Amazingly, *Dragon Age: Journeys* is anything but a vacuous piece of internet tat. Instead, it is worthy of being considered as a game in its own right.

What you expect is a simplistic *Golden Axe*-style beat-'em-up. What you get is a full-on RPG, with an inventory and a host of stats related to your weapons and armour. Quests, merchants and other staples of regular RPGs are all in there too, all bound together with an interface that borrows heavily from the main *Dragon Age* game. You can save



Full-on RPG stuff using Flash.



Hexy.

your progress online as well, which is rather extraordinary for a Flash game.

Not only that, but earn achievements in *Journeys* and you get access to items in *Origins*. So they aren't exactly world-shattering pieces of kit, but it's good to see achievements giving you something more than bragging rights for once.

Combat is taken care of in a hexagonal turn-based system. By refusing to bow to the assumption that the masses want everything to be fast, instant and furious, the developers have produced a game that'll see people still

playing for far longer than just the initial buzz factor surrounding the main game.

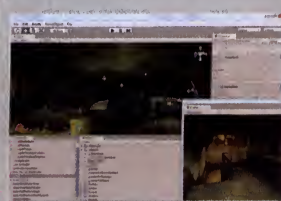
We're still struggling to believe that EA and BioWare have actually gone the extra mile with *Dragon Age: Journeys*. As mentioned, how easy would it have been to just re-skin *Golden Axe*? Perhaps we're being too kind because it's a Flash game that does so much, but there's a reason one of the team was playing it for an entire weekend (with semi-regular toilet breaks, health and safety fans). A little patience is needed on the initial load time, but by crikey, it's worth it.

## SNIPPETS



### PREMIUM SERVICE

On Bethesda's blog, ID's Marty Stratton said *Quake Live* might turn into a "premium service" (i.e. money will be needed to play). He also talked about private matches, so it's not all bad. [snipurl.com/quakeprem](http://snipurl.com/quakeprem)



### INDIE LOVE

Fancy making your own games using the *Unity Indie* package, but don't fancy spending upwards of \$200 to do so? Well, fret ye not, it's now free! The pro package is still \$1,500 though, sadly. [unity3d.com](http://unity3d.com)

## Bug Fix of the Month



**THIS MONTH**  
X3: TERRAN  
CONFLICT

"Renamed Mercenary Stations as Rehabilitation Facilities"

# METAL LEGENDS

*MechWarrior* modders beat the pros

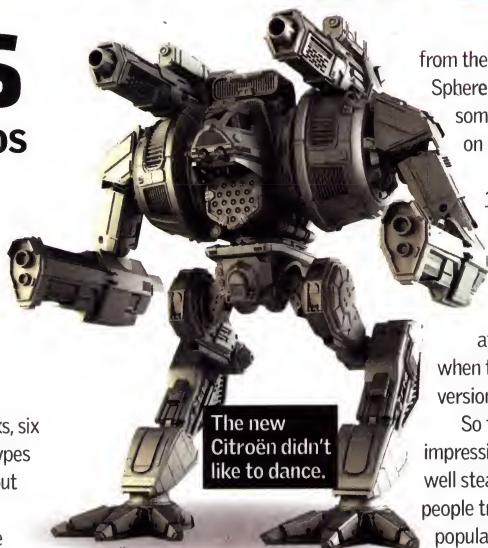
WEBSITE [mechlivinglegends.net](http://mechlivinglegends.net)

**F**ANS OF THE stompy robot games have been eagerly awaiting the reboot of the *MechWarrior* series, as well as the free remake of *MechWarrior 2* from mektek.net. However a new pretender to the titanium crown has risen from the mists, tantalising all with its CryEngine 2-based loveliness.

*MechWarrior: Living Legends* is sponsored by Crytek, according to the mod's website, and it looks the part.

Essentially, it's a mash-up of the *MechWarrior* games and the *Battlefield* series, with large-scale conflict between two human teams at the core of the total conversion of *Crysis*.

There'll be, at the time of writing, more than 28 Battlemechs, four tanks, six ground vehicles and eight different types of aircraft all shuffling their stuff about the maps, as well as the "infamous Battlesuits of the *Battletech* universe



The new Citroën didn't like to dance.

from the Clan Elemental to the Inner Sphere Longinus." If that means something to you, you've got one up on us.

Also being promised is a 32-player multiplayer setup, which should allow for some epic wreckage to be strewn about the place.

We'll be taking a closer look at this mod in a future issue, when the modders release a playable version.

So far it's looking ambitious and impressive in equal measure, and it may well steal the thunder of all the other people trying to get in on the new-found popularity of all things mech.



# Demos

Keith Pullin is covering you in DVD love



## NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT

Hurting down the home straight

WEBSITE [shift.needforspeed.com/uk](http://shift.needforspeed.com/uk)

**O**NE OF THE world's most commercially successful driving series returns with its most accurate portrayal of driving yet. Gone is the bling of recent offerings. Instead we have an experience that's closer to Forza and Gran Turismo even if it does fall short of the physics perfection that is GTR2.

With four different cars to sample and two tracks to tame, including a gorgeous London street circuit and the classic Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium, the demo offers a balanced example of *NFS: Shift's* blend of fantasy and realism. Plus, if you rack up 10 star achievements, which can be earned by setting fastest laps, podium finishes, top speeds and race wins, you get to unlock the Pagani Zonda F.

The racing community is truly divided on whether *Need for Speed: Shift* is a sim, arcade game or some kind of glossy hybrid. This is your chance to add your voice to the debate.



Rush hour at Piccadilly Circus.

### PROBLEM ZONE

Trouble with your DVD? Help is at hand!

1. If the menu doesn't appear when the disc spins up, open the Run command from the Start menu and enter D:\pcz.exe (D is the DVD drive's letter).
2. If you have a problem with a specific demo or application, check the DVD's Help section. Also ensure your PC's drivers and DirectX version are up-to-date.
3. If that doesn't work check our forums at [pczone.co.uk](http://pczone.co.uk) for fixes, or send an email to us at [letters@pczone.com](mailto:letters@pczone.com). Please describe the problem, what you were doing when it occurred, any error messages that came up, and your system's details.
4. If the DVD itself is faulty, send it and an SAE to Disc Department, Reader Support, Future Publishing Ltd, Bath, BA1 2BW, to get a new one.

We can only provide assistance with technical problems directly related to our cover DVD. The PCZONE discs have been tested and certified virus free by an independent organisation. We recommend that you always run an up-to-date virus checker on any software before running it. Future Publishing Ltd cannot accept any responsibility for disruption, damage and/or loss to your data or your computer system that may occur while using these discs, the programs or the data on them. Ensure that you have backups of data contained on your hard drives before running any new software.



### WE DON'T...

What's with the glowing racing line telling us where we need to point the car? Pros don't need that kind of nonsense. A trip to the options screen and it's gone.



### NEED NO...

The cockpit view looks great, but it gets in the way when gauging how much space there is for overtaking - a crucial thing in this game. Let's get rid of that too.

### THE JOURNEY TO ZONDALAND...



### TO WIN

The old beamer's a bit bashed up but its work is nearly done. Just three more stars and we can get to ride the Zonda F. It's enough to make Clarkson come slightly.



### STINKIN' HUD...

With the racetrack now fully visible we can focus on reeling in first place and racking up some more of those precious star achievements, so we can get a new car.



## RACE ON

### The wheel deal

WEBSITE [race-game.org/raceon](http://race-game.org/raceon)

**SEEMS WE HAVE** a bit of a wheeled theme brewing here. The simulation experts over at SimBin have just released the demo to *Race On* – which we've also reviewed on page 66 – and it's right here ready for you to lap up.



This dual-mode demo features a whole weekend event covering practice, qualifying and race, plus a more traditional time attack mode. Vehicle choice is between the meaty Dodge Challenger SRT8 and the (comparatively at least) sedate Seat Leon TDI.

The tracks on offer are likely to appeal to German topography enthusiasts with the Oschersleben and Falkenberg circuits featured.

If all that's not enough for you then the full release should be available now.

## BROTHERS GRIM



### WOOF

The Seat Leon TDI handles like a dog. Dread to think what Clarkson would say.



### MEOW

The Dodge Challenger SRT8 has better grip on the corners but can you handle the gloves?

## GEARGRINDER

### The long and grinding road

WEBSITE [headupgames.com](http://headupgames.com)

**AND THERE WAS** you thinking we've just chucked a load of driving games on the DVD this month are very wrong. *GearGrinder* is an arcade driving demolition game featuring trucks, and that's an entirely different thing.

This six-level demo version introduces you to the resplendent

carnage that draws upon a multitude of influences including *WipeOut* and *Interstate 76*. The range of weapons isn't as extensive as in the full game but there is a roof-mounted Gatling gun. You also get to transform from battle to race mode, which is like massaging your eyeballs with a potato peeler.



### 1. HARD POINTS

Weapons and mods can be placed on your cab, if you've got the cash to buy them.

### 2. RESOURCES

Ammo is shown in this gauge. In race mode this shows the amount of boost remaining.

### 3. GET IN THERE

Weapons have short or long ranges. The machine gun is only good when up close.

## RUN OR GUN



### COMBAT

In combat mode your truck is slow, but you can blow apart anything that gets in your way.



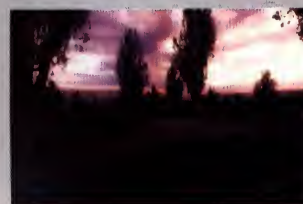
### SPEED

Race mode allows you to hit the turbos to launch your rig forward and ram the opposition.

## BEST OF THE REST



Nearly there. Here's one more demo, patch, mod and movie from this month's cover DVD...



### L.U.R.K.

[moddb.com/mods/lurk](http://moddb.com/mods/lurk)

A comprehensive *STALKER* update. We only just squeezed this massive mod onto the DVD so please try it, or our disc editor will shed radioactive tears.



### RISEN

[risen.deepsilver.com](http://risen.deepsilver.com)

This demo provides a taster of some of the tropical denizens ready to devour you in this highly rated RPG.



### AION

[aiononline.com](http://aiononline.com)

The launch trailer for NCsoft's latest MMO is so impressive it even managed to raise an eyebrow amongst hardened *WOW* players.



### COD: WORLD AT WAR

[callofduty.com/codww](http://callofduty.com/codww)

If you want more Nazi zombie goodness then this is the patch you need, as it has three new Nazi zombie maps. And everyone loves Nazi zombie maps.

**HOT**  
DOWNLOADS  
**PCZONE**

### DEAD BEFORE DAWN

[moddb.com/mods/dead-before-dawn](http://moddb.com/mods/dead-before-dawn)

This campaign pack for *Left 4 Dead* has the four survivors trapped in the Crossroads Mall from the 2004 *Dawn of the Dead* remake. It contains five new maps, with the finale level to follow soon.



### DEATH RALLY

[snipurl.com/deathrally](http://snipurl.com/deathrally)

Ever wondered what Remedy did before they made *Max Payne* and the eternally delayed *Alan Wake*? Well, they made this top-down racer that let you race *Duke Nukem*, shoot his car, and live to tell the tale.





# Freeware

Keith Pullin finds some free fun and games



This month we gulp down some physics soup; get bleeding eyes with an ASCII version of *Portal*, go for glory in an Formula One MMO strategy game, kill a bunch of aliens using squares, and last but not least explore the entire known universe in 20 minutes. Now that's gaming.

## PULLIN'S PULL OUT



### ASCII PORTAL

**DEVELOPER** Joe Larson and Steve Fenton  
**WEBSITE** [cymongames.com/asciiportal](http://cymongames.com/asciiportal)

**APPARENTLY SOME MIGHTILY** dextrous individuals can complete *Portal* in about five minutes flat. I don't understand how that's possible because I always get stuck in the first room and then get depressed thinking my brain must be on backwards or someone's swapped my eyeballs around when I was sleeping.

So it's pretty weird that this horrendous 2D blotch on my monitor gives me more pleasure than Valve's version ever did. The single-screen approach seems bizarre, but when you can see the entire level laid out before you like a street map, it's actually much easier to understand. At least for someone who's disoriented playing anything that looks vaguely like an FPS.

The other great thing about this version is that somehow instead of feeling like *Portal*, it actually begins to feel like *Lode Runner* or even *Jet Set Willy* – but far more mind-bending and fiendish, and with far superior collision detection.

It won't be too long before the jumble of ASCII starts to make you hallucinate, but the time you spend together will be memorable.



## REDRIVE

Thinking inside the box

**DEVELOPER** Amusement Makers **WEBSITE** [rebrank.org/products/redrive](http://rebrank.org/products/redrive)

**A** TOP-DOWN shooter shouldn't need instructions or take more than 30 seconds to figure out, and it should be instantly compelling. *RedRive* is exactly that, and it's a damned good job too because everything from the configure screen through to the intro is in Japanese.

But like we said, it doesn't matter. The moment you start playing it's clear that this is one of those games where

the less you think, the better you perform. The idea is blindingly simple: hold down the Z button, use the cursor keys to drag a rectangle around your wireframe alien foes to pop them and repeat until the level is clear. A limiter stops you drawing a giant rectangle to swallow up every enemy on screen.

Depending on how well you perform you then find yourself in another level where you do the same thing again, but with bigger, more numerous and more erratic moving targets.

On the surface it may sound like a concept lacking in skill but don't be fooled. The subtleties of the gameplay revolve around trying to kill the floaty enemies by trapping them in the smallest box possible – the smaller the box the higher the score. Snagging

several enemies in one box then gives you a multiplier bonus.

The temptation is always there to try and make the smallest box possible, but this high risk strategy is fraught with danger and a daring approach is nearly always met with swift demise. As with all the best arcade games you get three lives, rather than a girly energy bar, and so the best strategy appears to be a slow but steady approach. You can go gung-ho, but it'll end in tears.

If you're ready to forget about everything and prepared to lose a lunch break in the blink of an eye then do not hesitate to have a blast on *RedRive*. This is not just one of the best free games around at the moment, it's actually one of the most perfectly balanced top-down shooters on any format.



Japanese girl – in pink.



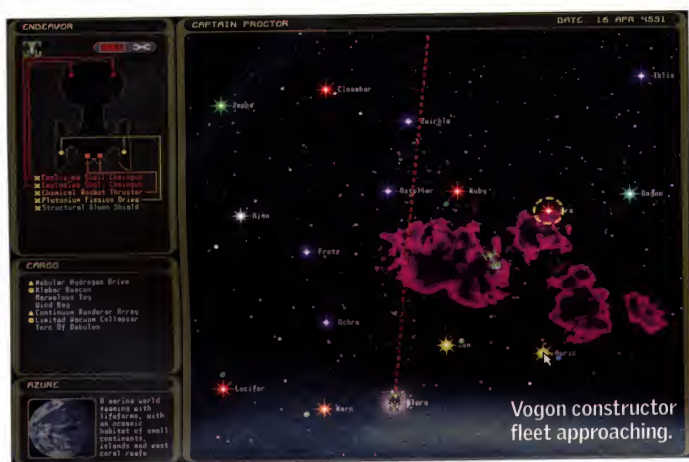
Watch what you catch in your box.



# STRANGE ADVENTURES IN INFINITE SPACE

Tour the universe while waiting for pizza

DEVELOPER Amusement Makers WEBSITE [digital-eel.com/sais](http://digital-eel.com/sais)



ONE OF THE main selling points of *Strange Adventures in Infinite Space* (if it cost anything) is you can explore the entire game in 20 minutes, returning to your home world with reports of ugly aliens, gas giants and exotic items. Your score is based on how much information you amass and how much plunder you can fit in your cargo hold.

Along the way you can trade with independent merchant ships who'll join you if you offer them something useful, like laser weapons or 'marvellous toys'.

As is the nature with unexplored space, you eventually stumble upon

hostile races who want to wipe you out. In combat mode you can control your fleet with the mouse and enjoy a change in pace as you chase your foes around the screen in real-time by repeatedly clicking with the mouse where you want go. Attacking occurs automatically when in range. Win, you increase your booty. Fail means the end of your quest – and life itself.

SAIS is not the most complex space strategy game ever, but it possesses most of the features expected in a game of this type and is great fun, if 20 minutes is all you're prepared to devote to the pursuit of galactic domination.



Look into my eyes...

# SOUP DE JOUR

Would you trust this chef?

DEVELOPER Digital Eel WEBSITE [digital-eel.com/soup](http://digital-eel.com/soup)

ORIGINALLY RELEASED IN 2007 this bubbly physics puzzle game has been re-released for the first time as a free title.

The easiest way to describe *Soup de Jour* is probably as a cross between *Puyo Puyo* and *Tetris* with a splash of wobbly physics and Match-4 gameplay thrown in.

Bizarre candies fall from the sky into your cooking pot and as chef you must move the candy around by clicking and dragging with the mouse so that four or more of the same type rest next each other. By doing this the ingredients will explode in a shower of points and conveniently clear a space in the pot that will be filled by more candies rushing in.

As the game progresses the ingredients get chunkier, the pot gets smaller and your mousing action has to get faster. The trouble is the faster you drag a piece of candy the more it disturbs the other pieces in the pot. So, not only do you have to mass the candy into clumps, you have to do it without knocking other ingredients out the pot. And trust us, that's easily done when your soup is overflowing with candy.

Matters are further complicated by the appearance of bombs which send the contents of your pot spewing over the side.

We're not sure about the rather phallic-looking character who introduces each level and sits by the stock pot (it seems a little unnecessary for a game about soup made of sweets) but aside from that, this is a deviously addictive puzzler.



Chef Ramsay gets a makeover.



Waiter! Waiter! There's a bomb in my soup.

## WEBGAME OF THE MONTH



### GP MANAGER PRO

DEVELOPER Deep Clone Racing  
WEBSITE [gpmanagerpro.com](http://gpmanagerpro.com)

THIS BROWSER-BASED MMO lets you choose drivers and staff and then plot your path to racing glory.

Races happen daily in a 10-race season within a multi-tiered league system featuring promotions and relegations. A race's outcome is calculated on when your driver makes their first pit stop. So success boils down to finding the right component setup for your chosen fuel loads.

In the past F1 management games have always been against computer opponents so it makes a pleasant change to see how your strategies pan out against humans – particularly when you can even partake in a little espionage and spying. Engrossing and addictive, this is one for all F1 fans.



# Extend



Keith Pullin explores the world of mods, maps and add-ons



The battle at the cutting room floor.



Forget it. You don't stand a chance with her.



Back from the dead.

## TSL RESTORED CONTENT

New nights with old knights

MOD FOR *Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords* [WEBSITE: snipurl.com/tslrestore](http://www.snipurl.com/tslrestore)

**W**HEN CONTENT FROM a game is removed prior to its release it could be for a number of reasons: poor quality, inappropriate for the PEGI rating, or the lead character looks like the producer's mum. Occasionally a game's discarded feature will be revived in a sequel, but more often than not it's lost forever. However, modders can be a determined bunch though and the small team responsible for this update have attempted to restore *KOTOR2* to its full, pre-edited glory.

Anyone familiar with this *Star Wars* RPG classic will know it suffered more

than most with regards to careless editing and 11th-hour changes. In 2005 LucasArts was particularly fussy about the way the *Star Wars* universe was portrayed. Unfortunately this overzealous policing created agonising cuts in *KOTOR2* which destroyed the flow to such an extent the dialogue, character actions and quests would often make no sense.

Some characters were even changed visually at the last moment. For example, one NPC, Hussein, was a white-haired old codger, before being morphed into a flame-haired 30-something for the release version.

In another famous scene when a trio of Jedi Masters are attacked by Kreia, they were thrown backwards. However, this mod shows what was really meant to happen: Kreia killing them all.

Most frustrating of all was the game ending, which was ravaged to the point where the fates of some characters were entirely overlooked, and a major quest – HK-47's attack on a robot assassin factory – was left incomplete.

To cut a very long story short, this restoration fixes dozens of incidents that left the player scratching their head in bewilderment. What we are left with is a game closer to how the devs

imagined the story; one with a much darker plot than LucasArts envisioned.

It's also worth noting that this mod has nothing to do with the Team Gizka Restoration Project Mod which is still in development, but has apparently slowed recently due to their admirable, if slightly time-consuming, insistence on attempting to remove every single bug in the game.

There are other mods offering partial fixes to *KOTOR2*, but there's nothing that re-establishes the flow as comprehensively and dramatically as this one. But it's still in beta, so requires the occasional patch itself.



# L.U.R.K.

## Lurking with intent

MOD FOR STALKER: Shadow over Chernobyl | **WEBSITE** [moddb.com/mods/lurk](http://moddb.com/mods/lurk)

AS REGULAR READERS of this section will know *STALKER* has been significantly expanded by various modifications over the years – and now *L.U.R.K.* makes its contribution.

*L.U.R.K.* takes *STALKER* in a slightly new direction by introducing stealth. We're not talking *Thief*-style crouching for hours in the shadows – this is a far more intuitive take on the element of surprise which irons out some inconsistencies with the game's AI and environment, rather than changing the play dynamics entirely.

A good example of this is when you go creep up behind your target for a sneaky knife kill. Previously you'd alert the attention of every soldier within a five-mile radius as the lifeless body slumped to the floor. With this near psychic level of alertness reduced to more realistic proportions, you can now revel in your sneakiness and move to your next victim safe in the knowledge that if you stay in the shadows you could take out the next few guards without wasting any ammunition.

The introduction of a splattering of random downpours enhances the sense of misery and desolation. There's also the obligatory visual tweaks to the environment, weapon models and animations to generate what is probably a less glaring look than *Complete 2009*.

*L.U.R.K.* is fine addition to the stable of *STALKER* mods.



Floss, or this could happen to you.



Could *STALKER* get any bleaker?



Apparently it could.

# UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3

## RENEGADE X

A Nod in the right direction

MOD FOR Unreal Tournament 3 | **WEBSITE** [moddb.com/mods/renegade-x](http://moddb.com/mods/renegade-x)

WHEN IT WAS released in 2002 *C&C: Renegade* was a huge letdown. The idea of Nod battling the GDI in a FPS/RTS hybrid promised much, but poor visuals and an unstable multiplayer system ensured *C&C* and FPS fans quickly moved on.

*Renegade X* is the first of a planned series of mods seeking to fill the need for a good *C&C* shooter. And so far it's shaping up nicely. For those who were spared the original, the idea is pretty straight forward: fighting for either Nod or GDI you must defeat the



opposing force by planting C4 explosives in their base, or bombarding it from the outside with a range of special weapons such as the ion cannon.

With PC technology that can now do the concept justice we finally have a proper game. Most of the original buildings and units are present, however some of the animations could do with being tweaked. There are currently only two maps as well, but once again we're informed there should be additions to these pretty soon. In fact, by the time you read this the mod should be about two or three updates better off.



Walk the line.



Hard hat area.

## MOD CONS!

The add-ons to avoid



### PROTOTYPE ALEX MOD v2

MOD FOR Prototype | **WEBSITE** [snipurl.com/alexmod](http://snipurl.com/alexmod)

This fashion howler sees mutant shapeshifter Alex sporting tight white jeans. If you're looking for that early '80s *Miami Vice* or George Michael look then congratulations, you've found it. Just bear in mind, if somebody catches you wearing these, you'll never, ever live it down.



# Get Under The Bonnet

Keith Pullin gets his pit pass checked and heads for *GTR2*'s mod paddock

**D**ESPITE ITS AGE, *GTR2* is still the PC's most realistic racing simulation and arguably the best on any platform. *Forza* and *Gran Turismo* may claim to be driving simulators but the truth is they're designed to appeal to the console player, who needs to feel like a world champion straight away. Ultimately this means that without exception, console racing games are arcade games. Publishers can't afford to risk releasing anything else.

*GTR2* is one of very few genuine racing simulations around, but it does have competition. The ageing *Grand Prix Legends* (issue 90, 90%) still has a few die-hard fans knocking about; *GT Legends* (issue 161, 92%) also has a staunch following; and *rFactor* (issue 190, 80%) maintains a strong fan base (including our own Wandy), and was recently used to showcase the new Donnington Park. Even the online-only racing MMO *iRacing* (iracing.com) is picking up momentum, but nothing comes close to *GTR2* in terms of the sheer amount vehicle packs, custom championships, HUD add-ons and other goodies available.

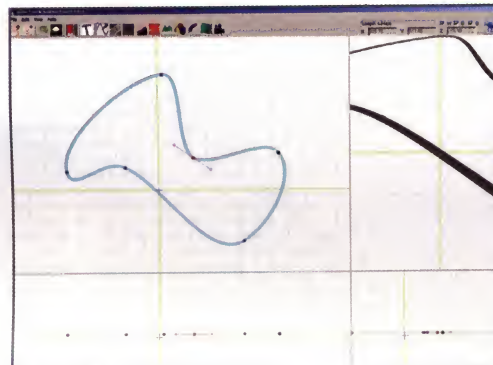
SimBin's masterpiece is three years old, but it keeps improving thanks to a devoted community. The sheer strength of support for *GTR2* was highlighted in August 2009 when its original publisher 10Tacle Studios closed down, pulling the plug on the game's multiplayer server. The fan outcry was louder than a Tiffosi roar for a Ferrari one-two at Monza. SimBin, the game's developer, reacted and within days *GTR2* servers were back up and running.





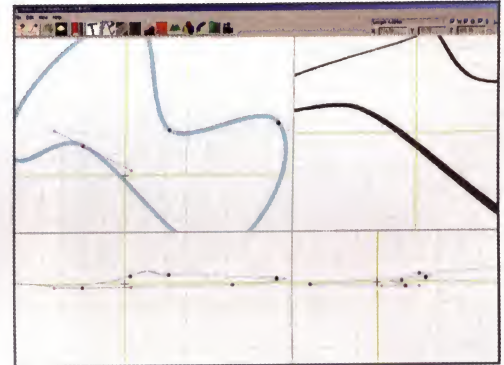
## BUILD YOUR OWN RACE TRACK

As a motor racing fan one of the most rewarding things you can do is make your own race track. Designing tracks on *GTR2* is surprisingly easy – all you need is a little tool called *Bob's Track Builder* (bobstrackbuilder.net). Although this is a general tool rather than a specific *GTR2* mod, it's still fascinating to play around with. Here's our four-step guide to creating a drivable circuit...



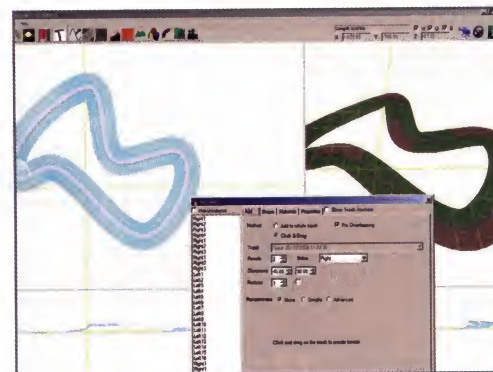
### STEP 1

We'll spend no more than two minutes on a basic shape. This can be done by selecting the continuous loop icon at the top left and then adding nodes onto the 3D grid. We can then drag those nodes around to make the shape.



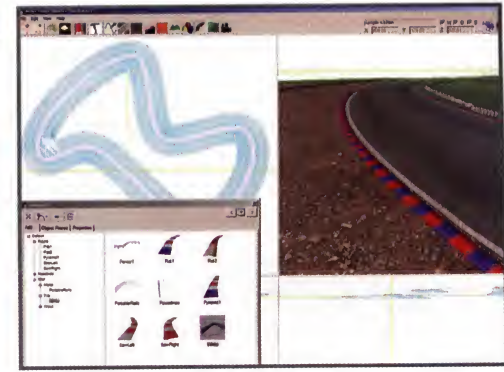
### STEP 2

Time to add height variations and camber. To change the height grab the nodes in the bottom right window of the 3D pane and pull them about. Once we've got a nice undulating track click the camber icon and use the gauge to adjust.



### STEP 3

We need some terrain. Click on the terrain icon and set the polygon size for each piece. Now, click the track section where you want to start laying turf and drag. Fill in the outer and inner areas. Create gravel run off areas in the same way.



### STEP 4

Add kerbs by using the string object icon. Click near the track and drag the kerb to the desired length then use the align button to stick it to the edge. You can add tyre walls in exactly the same way. Save your track into the gtr2/ gamedata/locations directory and it's ready for a test drive.



The Aston Martin V8 Vantage. A 180mph rear-wheeled animal.



# TOP 10 CARS

The range of vehicles available for *GTR2* is impressive. Virtually every kind of car you can think of from a Ford Capri to the 2009 Le Mans winning Peugeot 908 HDi FAP is available. We try out nogripracing.com's 10 most popular cars and packs...



## 1. SUBARU IMPREZA

There are three 450bhp Subarus in this mod – the Auto Super Lemon, Prova Racing Division Impreza, and Cusco Impreza.



## 2. MITSUBISHI LANCER EV08

Great Mitsubishi mod offering full race 461bhp NGT class Evos and 361bhp light-tuned track-day Evos.



## 3. FORD GT

This beautiful GT1 was made for the NAGP (North American Grand Prix) league. Handles like a pregnant elephant though. But that's American GTs for you.



## 4. NISSAN SKYLINE R34

The perfect rival to the Mitsubishi Lancer. Includes full race GT class R34s and light-tuned R34s.



## 5. JAPAN SGT300 PACK

These class 300 cars from the Japanese Super GT series are great fun especially in the wet. Japanese drivers like it wet apparently.



## 6. VOLKSWAGEN GOLF V GTI CUP PACK

Ten cars here. Reminds me of my youth, although the Golf GTi didn't feel like a BMW Z3 M-Coupé back then.



## 7. SUPER GT500 PACK

Lots and lots of very lovely GT500 cars. Worth a download if you're not already sick of GTs.



## 8. ALFA ROMEO 8C

Six NGT teams and two GT2 teams with stunning reflections and shadows thrown in too. Heaven for Alfa Romeo fans. Hell for normal people.



## 9. AUDI R10 2007

Audi's entry into the 2007 Le Mans was the rather nifty R10 LMP1. Wild fun when used with the Le Mans track mod.



## 10. CHAMPCAR LOLA PACK 2005-2006

Lots of teams and drivers and the cars all handle exactly the same as expected from a standard Lola.



# TOP 10 TRACKS

Most of the world's most popular circuits can be downloaded from a range of websites, but it's often the obscurities that offer the most interesting races. Hardcore fans should take note that track updates often appear just before major real-life races. Here are PCZ's 10 must-haves from nogripracing.com.



## 2. NORDSCHLEIFE

The greatest racing circuit ever built? At 14.17 miles long it's certainly the longest. It takes about 10 years to learn every brake point, but it's totally compelling.



## 5. MONACO 2007

The world's most glamorous race track. The blast along the marina through Tabac, onto Piscine and then La Rascasse is pure Champagne motor racing.



## 8. INTERLAGOS 2.0

Where the F1 World Championship gets decided. Brazil's premier circuit is a classic along with Spa, Silverstone, Monaco and Suzuka.



## 3. LE MANS 24HR - REVIVED ED.

With four endless straights that mesmerise during the day and terrify at night it's easy to see why this is seen as one of the world's toughest tracks.



## 6. CADWELL PARK

The forest setting of Cadwell Park is simply stunning. Threading a Formula 1 Ferrari through the tree-lined chicanes is guaranteed to loosen your stools.



## 9. HITCHIN TOWN CENTRE

If you've ever been stuck in a traffic jam in any town in the United Kingdom, this is the mod that lets you vent that anger. Hitchin meets Monaco. Very odd.



## 1. SINGAPORE - MARINA PARK

This floodlit race has already made a name for itself due to the F1 Crash-gate scandal in 2008. To be fair to young senior Piquet, Turn 17 is tricky.



## 4. LAGUNA SECA

Probably the best-designed circuit in America and famous for its outrageous hilltop corkscrew chicane. This Californian dust bowl has to be in your collection.



## 7. WATKINS GLEN - ALL LAYOUTS

This scenic circuit has the long, Grand Prix, and NASCAR layouts. The second best circuit in the US.



## 10. SUZUKA 2.0

A figure-of-eight circuit with virtually every kind of corner you can think of as well as a long straight with a ferocious flat-out left-hander. Brilliant fun.



# BEST GTR2 MOD EVER!

**F1 2009 V2.1 with Kers MOD**

WEBSITE [simracingnetherlands.nl](http://simracingnetherlands.nl)



**WITH THE LATEST** 2009 Formula One pack installed, *GTR2* turns into the best F1 simulator available, anywhere, ever.

So there is a slight problem with the undertray dragging along the ground, but it can be solved by increasing the ride height to around 6-7cm clearance at the rear, and about 4cm at the front. The hand detail on the steering wheel isn't great either, but that's forgivable.

The audio is extremely authentic and features some amazing engines, highlights of which are a growling Red Bull and a waspish McLaren. Not only does this pack come with all the 2009 teams and drivers, it's also the only F1 game so far to feature a KERS button.

If you're an F1 fan it's almost worth buying *GTR2* just for this.

## THE HARDEST BUTTON TO BUTTON

"There are a lot of ifs in Formula One. In fact, it is F1 backwards" – Murray Walker

### AERODYNAMICS

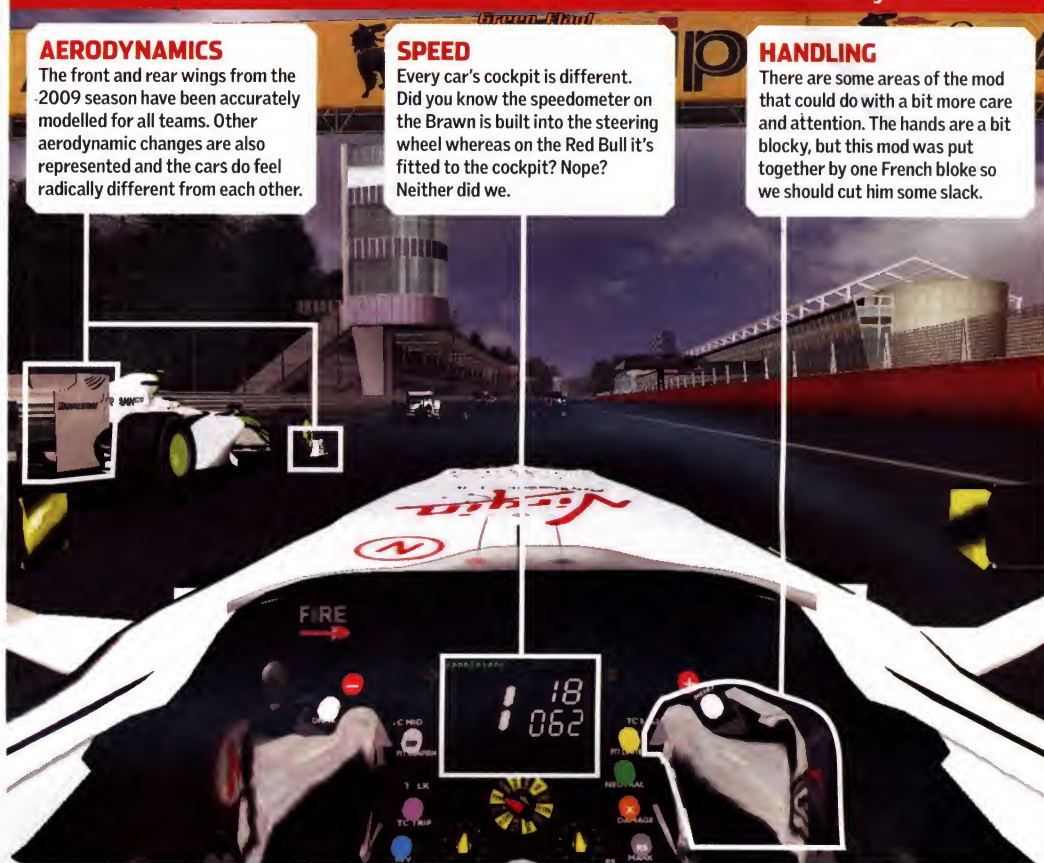
The front and rear wings from the 2009 season have been accurately modelled for all teams. Other aerodynamic changes are also represented and the cars do feel radically different from each other.

### SPEED

Every car's cockpit is different. Did you know the speedometer on the Brawn is built into the steering wheel whereas on the Red Bull it's fitted to the cockpit? Nope? Neither did we.

### HANDLING

There are some areas of the mod that could do with a bit more care and attention. The hands are a bit blocky, but this mod was put together by one French bloke so we should cut him some slack.



## THE BEST OF THE REST

A few miscellaneous mods...



### GTR2 MAP PLUGIN V101

WEBSITE [nogripracing.com](http://nogripracing.com)

*GTR2* has traditionally never had a track map. All that has changed now thanks to this handy mod that should take away those new track blues. It doesn't work on all circuits but most are covered. And we don't care what anybody else says – it's not cheating.



### SPRINT CAR ROAD CHALLENGE

WEBSITE [falloutmotorsports.110mb.com](http://falloutmotorsports.110mb.com)

This crazy little buggy type thing is an odd kind of vehicle, but it really should be part of your *GTR2* modding collection. It handles like a skateboard with wonky wheels but despite that it's still worth taking a drive round Nordschleife with it.



### THE BIG RAMP

WEBSITE [nogripracing.com](http://nogripracing.com)

*Stunt Car Racer* is a stupidly addictive game, and is a sort-of prequel to Geoff Crammond's *Formula One Grand Prix*. This is a silly homage to Mr Crammond but does manage to titillate those nostalgia taste buds. Try it with *Sprint Car* to get the full *Stunt Car Racer* effect.



### POWER AND THE GLORY MOD 2.0

WEBSITE [gtlw.co.uk](http://gtlw.co.uk)

This recreation of *GT Legends* has all vehicles based on race championships from the '60s and '70s, with over 200 cars with 100 different physics variants. Definitely worth checking out if you're a classic car nut. Look out for the 2.1 update soon.



### CATERPILLAR DIGGER MOD

WEBSITE [simracingworld.com](http://simracingworld.com)

This goliath isn't the best choice of vehicle for Monaco, but it certainly makes life interesting when it comes to the tunnel. For something a little bit out of the ordinary give this a shot. It also comes in small and medium for the Tonka truck fans.



# 1 Celebrity Guest

## TOP GEAR GOES PC

PC ZONE hijacks the *Top Gear* test track

WEBSITE [simracingworld.com](http://simracingworld.com)

Michael Gambon makes a welcome return.

WE'VE ALL WANTED to take the "reasonably priced car" for a spin around the *Top Gear* test track. Thanks to the power of *GTR2* you can now download the pitiful Chevrolet Lacetti along with the Dunsfold Aerodrome, and finally give Jay Kay a run for his money.

The lack of visual markers, and The Stig, makes learning the track a nightmare, but if you follow an AI car for a while – or watch all the *Top Gear* repeats on Dave – you should get the gist. And just so you know where you fit in – here's the current top 20 lap times.



Is that Billie Piper going round the bend?

### TOP GEAR'S LAP TIMES

The times to beat

DRIVER	TIME
Jay Kay	1.45.8
Brian Johnson	1.45.9
Kevin McCloud	1.45.9
Simon Cowell	1.45.9
Jennifer Saunders	1.46.1
Gordon Ramsay	1.46.38
Usain Bolt	1.46.5
Peter Jones	1.46.9
Trevor Eve	1.47.09
Peter Firth	1.47.1
Lawrence Dallaglio	1.47.4
Les Ferdinand	1.47.41
Jamie Oliver	1.47.68 (wet)
Hugh Grant	1.47.7
Well spoken man (James Hewitt)	1.47.69
Ewan McGregor	1.48.0
Rupert Penry-Jones	1.48.1
Billie Piper	1.48.3
James Blunt	1.48.4 (wet)

For the latest times, visit: [bbc.co.uk/topgear](http://bbc.co.uk/topgear)

FINISH 00:00.000 01:39.828

PLAYER

SWITCH CAR

ONBOARD

TELEVISION

MONITOR SOUND

PRACTICE 1

7.46

## ROUND UP

The future of *GTR2* is in your hands

IF IT HADN'T been for the thriving fan community *GTR2* would have died. Thankfully it never came to that, and with any luck it will survive for another three years.

There's no reason why not. When you look at the continuing popularity of *Half-Life 2* and the community support it still enjoys, it's easy to see how the top game in its genre can continue to inspire years after release.

Great games don't need yearly updates or monthly DLC to remind everyone how good they are. Games like *GTR2* build their legendary status by having one successful version that everyone sticks by for years.

Of course, it would be great to have another version at some point. SimBin are gradually improving the physics engine with every driving game they put out there (see *RACE On*, page 66,

to see how they're doing today). Hopefully this progress will culminate in the fanfare arrival of *GTR3*. But whilst we keep uncovering new treasures in the eclectic world of *GTR2*'s user-created content, we're more than happy to make do for a while yet.

Whilst these pages won't cover every mod or pack out there, it should

give you a pretty good taster of the shenanigans you can get up to with this top-class racer. And with any luck give you the urge to start delving deeper. Enjoy.



NO CD PATCH (ONLY FOR V1.1)

WEBSITE [nogripacing.com](http://nogripacing.com)

This mod lets you can play the game without having the CD in the drive. So it's not much, but it's worth having as it means you don't have to remember which pile of mess your left your *GTR2* game CD under. Just be sure to patch *GTR2* to v1.1 before you using it. And this is a bit of a naughty thing to do, legally speaking.



# HOW TO Make a game

## PART 4: Steve Hogarty finds slopes are a pain the arse

**O**NE OF LIFE'S certainties is that if you can walk at all, you can walk on most inclines. There are natural limits to the severity of the angled surfaces on which you can stride, but for the most part they're no trouble. If anything, they add a bit of much-needed spice to the mundanity of walking around.

Now if you've read this feature before, you already understand that the simplest of actions – a goose stealing a hat, a triumphant leap into the air, tilted perambulation – is often unfeasibly complicated when rendered in code.

Let me try to explain something I barely understand myself. Taking jumping out of the equation, the way the character moves left and right along a level is based on keyboard input and collision detection.

As long as the right arrow key is held he'll accelerate to a certain speed (8 pixels per frame) and maintain it



until the collision detection (a per-frame check of the character's position plus his speed, ie however many pixels per frame he's moving by) detects a collision and cuts his speed to zero. Simple.

In encountering a vertical wall this works perfectly, but if he encounters a slope a problem occurs.

To the impartial eye of soulless machines, slopes are seen as a series of tiny, pixel-tall walls. Instead of checking for a collision a certain number of pixels ahead of the character, we also have to check slightly above that – if there's no collision there, then the wall is sufficiently short to allow the character to move on top of it. That's how you make things run up slopes.

### UPS AND DOWNS

Moving down slopes is, and this is no joke, an entirely different matter.

Physics tend to make your character fling themselves over edges like Steve McQueen driving through



San Francisco, so you're forced to, effectively, turn off gravity for the sake of sticking your character to the sloped floor. And by doing that you dick up the code that enables your character to jump, which is what I'm trying to fix now.

Slopes are a big, boring pain in the arse, and I can't apologise enough for



## STEVE INSPIRES I did it like Steve



Reader David Brinnen was motivated by Steve's efforts to create *Pong-ish* ([snipurl.com/pongish](http://snipurl.com/pongish)). But, he says: "I couldn't make the game fun. Mostly it's irritating." Encouraging!

attempting to explain just how much of a nuisance they are. Next month I promise to have implemented something far more interesting, like something that's not a goose, a hat or a tree, for example.

## NEXT MONTH

Steve does something that's not related to a goose, a hat or a tree.

## DO IT YOURSELF Do it like Steve

### WWW.YOYOGAMES.COM/ GAMEMAKER

Can't be arsed learning to code an engine? Neither can I. The simple but tremendously powerful development platform *GameMaker* does most of the hard stuff for you.

### FORUMS.INDIEGAMER.COM

For when you need help, all the coolest indie folk hang out here and exchange ideas and tips and stuff.

### TIGSOURCE.COM

Even more indie community stuff going on round this way, whether you want to get involved or just stare sycophantically at the indie crowd as they do their thing.

### WWW.GIMP.ORG

Free, open-source image editor. This is actually very difficult to use, but if you don't want to drop hundreds of pounds on *Photoshop*, it's all you got. Well, that and *MS Paint*.

**"The simplest of actions is often unfeasibly complicated when rendered in code"**



**DIRTY HARRY  
WOULD LOVE IT.  
POIROT?  
NOT SO MUCH.**



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# Online Zone

What's new in PC ZONE's forum and Fight Club

COME AND  
TAKE ON THE  
ZONE STAFF IN  
OUR MONTHLY  
ONLINE GAMING  
FREE-FOR-ALL!

Back to basics this month with a classic *Team Fortress 2* Fight Club on an even more classic map, 2fort. Elsewhere, we've got the impaling of rectums and a 3D Jenna Jameson in Zone Chat, and some interesting twittering about *Windows* skins and the evil that is governmental interference on the internet. Finally, our very own forumites decide that *The Witcher 2* is very much a "yay!" game.

## FIGHT CLUB

Ein! Zwei! Fort!



**TRADITION, JUST LIKE** a Sumo wrestler, carries a lot of weight here at Zone Towers. So, when stuck in a bind over what game to play, *Team Fortress 2* is always on the tip of our tongues. It might help if we made sure both of our servers were working before starting, of course, but you can't expect us to think of everything.

As it stands, a 7v7 game on 2fort was what was managed, with our very own Steve spending the entire time in a futile struggle with our second server. For those who did manage to get in, it's fair to say that a good time was had. I mean, you're playing against PCZ readers and writers, how could you fail to enjoy yourself?

One thing that did raise an eyebrow was that the match wasn't just a sniper frenzy. A lot of people must still be struggling to get those tricky Scout achievements, because baseball bats and double-jumping lunatics seemed to

be most prevalent. This also meant that both teams kept having their intelligence

Lots of lovely halos.



snatched. Pyros were also common, so repeated trips into the water were needed to quash their threat.

[MH]Mr.Monkey dominated early on with his Force-a-Nature, taking out resident Scout noob David easily. He did get his own back later on, but the damage had been done. Deciding to avoid contact with his nemesis, David just stole the intelligence and earned an achievement for returning it to his base without taking any damage.

Fight Club regular Jonny\_p66 turned up and proceeded to make very little difference on proceedings, as is his

wont. It's just nice to see him continue to turn up, never knowing when he's beaten. That's the kind of spirit we admire, as we're pretty much all the same. It doesn't matter that we're terrible at these games, we'll still put ourselves on the line. Luckily, most of you are woeful as well, so we're in good company.

One final point: it was nice to see so many halos. It just goes to show what an honourable lot you people are, refusing to bow and scrape at the altar of disgraceful exploitation. If you're unaware what that's all about, it just means that, if you're wearing a halo in *TF2*, you never used what Valve consider to be an 'exploit' to gain unlocked weapons or achievements. If you did, shame on you.

With that sanctimonious comment, we shall leave you this month. What game will we be playing next time out? It might just be a sequel to a popular game involving slaughtering the living dead. Except this time, you might see some machetes.

tw@tter

Tweeting like a bird



THE INTERNET  
Who cares what you really look like, your profile says whatever you want.

**WE'RE ALL ABOUT** giving you nice readers lovely things, so what better present from us to you than a free link to an even freer *Windows* skin that makes your desktop look like you're actually in a game of *Left 4 Dead* permanently. We can't think of anything better either. Except maybe a *Left 4 Dead 2* one. If you want it, use this link: [bit.ly/3NINVB](http://bit.ly/3NINVB).

Don't worry, we aren't just all about frivolities when we tweet, we also care about serious issues. Like government plans to execute file sharers with automatic weapons. Or have them banned from the internet, one of the two. It seems that even much-spoofed spies at MI5 believe the solution could be worse than the problem, given the number of people who would go underground and just hide behind complex encryption methods - which makes them harder to spy on, of course.

Besides this we got overexcited about playing *L4D2* demos during lunch breaks, and the *Assassin's Creed II* YouTube movies.

Remember, there's always something going on at Zone Towers, so if you want to be privy to all our inner workings, be sure to follow @pczone.



We forgot to take  
screenshots you see...





# NOTES FROM THE FORUM

**Will *The Witcher 2* be a yay or a nay? We think the former...**

**ANDY\_MONAHAN:** Yay! Quick time events... er, yay?

**BEATS12:** The inclusion of QTEs is a touch unsettling. Hopefully they'll be used sparingly and intelligently.

**PEACHFUZZ:** Yeah right! Why not just ask for the sun to turn into a lollipop? Or rainbow drops to flow freely from your taps at home? Or Hollywood to make a movie where the car doesn't explode when it drives off a cliff? Or George Lucas to admit he didn't have it all planned out and lied to us from the start? LIED!!!!

**BEATS12:** Well, if the QTEs are restricted to boss fights, then I can live with it. It is a depressingly lazy way of doing things, though.

**APOPHIS\_DD:** Yeah, looks like it's a boss exclusive. I wouldn't say it's lazy, as they've added something that's unnecessary to something that already works fine. You probably won't need to make use of the QTE, but why not, if

activating them is not too easy and if they produce something cool to watch.

I was a little worried by the mention of the QTE before I saw it, but now I have and feel good about it, I'm looking forward to the sequel to one of the best games ever.

**THETINGLER:** Everything Apophis said just there = truth. Incredibly looking forward to this already, I'm just worried that they haven't found a publisher yet. Atari's folded in Europe and the PC-only side of it might scare a few of the bigger publishers. Let's hope for EA.

**DR\_DARK:** Oddly enough, I'd suggest they go ask Capcom or SEGA if they'd like to publish it.

**IAINJOH:** The revelation that *The Witcher 2* really exists made me happy in the pants.

**BLOODCHILLIN:** Please don't be published by EA. Everyone say this 2,183 times a night before bed and we may get lucky.



That's gotta hurt.

## CAN'T MAKE FIGHT CLUB?

If you find yourself unable to make it to Fight Club – perhaps you've decided to write that love letter to your neighbour's Alsatian – then feel free to join other PCZ readers on the following public servers.

### WHO'S WHO

**Steve Hogarty** [PCZ]misterbrilliant  
**David Brown** [PCZ]plughead  
**Phil Wand** [PCZ]peoplesfrontofjudea  
**Jon Blyth** [PCZ]log  
**Will Porter** [PCZ]batsphinx  
**Nick Brakespear** [PCZ]flatline  
**Chris Capel** [PCZ]thetingler

**BATTLEFIELD 2**  
 85.236.100.48:16567

**CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE**  
 85.236.100.48:28960

**COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE**  
 85.236.100.48:27015

**DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE**  
 85.236.100.48:27315

**HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH**  
 85.236.100.48:27215

**TEAM FORTRESS 2**  
 85.236.100.48:27115

**SERVERS PROVIDED BY...**



**MULTIPLAY**

# ZONE CHAT

**Rectal impaling on rollercoasters**



A prime example of the uncanny valley.



**THIS MONTH WE actually did a Zone Chat. No empty chat rooms (although attendance was a bit sparse at first) and no lone voices in a digital wilderness.**

The first topic of discussion was the delights of massacring punters in the *Rollercoaster Tycoon* games, either by building death trap rides, releasing a herd of elephants into a crowd or, as Disc10 said, making a ride that ends with you being "impaled through your own arse". We're not sure that bit was actually in the game, though. Maybe Disc10 was just summoning up some homoerotic fantasies from deep down within his subconscious.

To prevent the discussion being just another half-hour of relentless sodomy, *Borderlands* crept into the frame as a "theme of the day". [Quite]Rob demanded to be able to play *Borderlands*, but the fact it wasn't out then meant he couldn't. No sympathy was shown, of course.

Mad AI entered the fray by asking what playing *Virtually Jenna*

would be like in 3D. We don't know, but we're sure it would be fun finding out. But that's one review that we wouldn't do in the office. Then Mad AI said he'd be willing to sell a kidney to get some 3D kit. There's plenty of dodgy doctors around, AI, we're sure you'd be able to find someone.

And at the end of the day, selling internal organs to fuel a PC gaming addiction is what it's all about.



### HOW TO JOIN IN!

To be a part of next month's ZONE Chat, join our Steam Community group: PC ZONE (PCZ). If you don't have Steam, first be ashamed of yourself, and then download it from steampowered.com. Keep an eye out for announcements in that there Steam group for the date of the next chat event...



# Retrozone

Facing the wrong way since 1995...

## Flashback

# DAMOCLES: MERCENARY II

**E**RIS IS DOOMED. Damocles is bearing down on her like a sack of cosmic potatoes. The population has been evacuated and you've arrived four years too late (thanks to the events of the original *Mercenary* having sidetracked you). You now only have a matter of hours in which to save Eris from its collision course with the titular asteroid by any means possible.

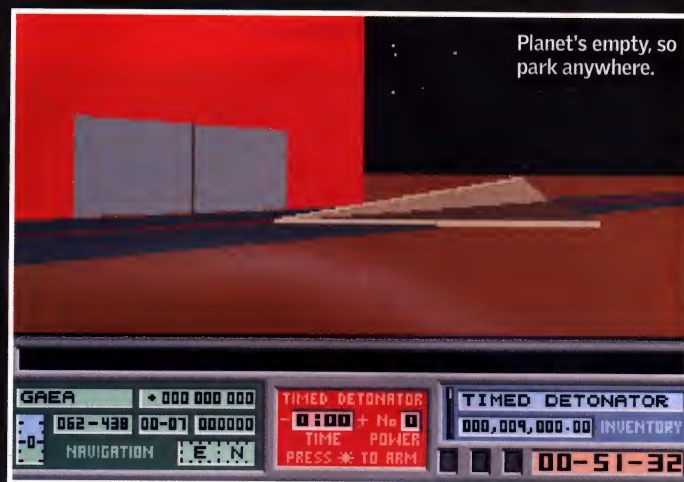
There are at least five ways to do this, some of which don't even involve destroying Damocles. Obliterate the system's innermost planet, for example, and you'll affect the gravitational pull on

Damocles, steering it off course. This will net you 25 million credits from the Lloyd's Foundation, who view the comet as a potential future tourist attraction. Otherwise, the most well-travelled means to victory is tracking down the Novabomb and its eight triggers in this massive 3D world.

And it is massive. *Damocles*, along with *Mercenary* before it, were truly milestones in 3D gaming. Testaments to what developers can do when they explore the limits of the day's tech. Planets can be flown between and landed on, the cities can be explored by car, aircraft or spaceship, there are buildings with doors and elevators. This was mind-blowing stuff.

The trick was to only ever show one building at once, so they were placed so far apart that you could never see two. Despite that, there remained a feeling of connectivity in the environments.

*Mercenary III* took it even further, adding buses and taxis, animated signs,



Planet's empty, so park anywhere.

other characters and spacecraft. There was even a casino on one of the planets, and though it contained nothing apart from a single slot machine (which could be rigged using a magnet to bankrupt the game's villain and win the game) it was still excellent.

Source modders, how hard could it be to knock up a sparkly new version of this over a weekend with your games writing pens? We're guessing it would be "not very hard at all". And we know what we're talking about: we're a PC games mag.

## But how? Save Eris, save the world...

It's the Atari ST again, we might as well start calling this section Atari ST Zone and be done with it. The fact is, we're deeply in love with Atari ST emulation. It's the greatest form of emulation since bad hip-hop cover versions of *Walk On By*, and it's so simple to do. *Mercenary* and *Damocles* appear on an Automation diskette, though *Mercenary III* is more difficult to find – it

was cracked by "cynix". That should help your googling mightily.

### steem.atari.st

Our favourite ST emulator. There's a cache of Automation compilation disks out there somewhere too, aid your search with an engine and it'll be found in the digital exhaust fumes.



Eye-searingly realistic!

## Emerge Victorious The six ways to finish Damocles...



**1 EXPLODE IT**  
Plant explosives on the surface of Damocles to obliterate it. This is the blunt approach.



**2 MOVE IT**  
Plant explosives on the surface of Icarus to obliterate it and alter Damocles' course.



**3 NOVABOMB IT**  
A single Novabomb and all eight triggers will do the same job as the piles and piles of explosives.



**4 WISH IT**  
There's a wishing crystal on one of the planets that'll let you wish the problem away. Honestly.



**5 HACK IT**  
Find the author's computer, a debug kit that allows you to delete entities. Like planets, and comets.



**6 IGNORE IT**  
Or you could simply wait around for the impact. The game continues on afterwards.



## Now & Then

### BIOSHOCK 2 vs FLOOD



**THIS IS PROBABLY** an unfair comparison, as *Flood* is far superior to *BioShock 2* in terms of rudimentary water physics. In the former, levels are slowly being flooded by a running tap, while your character, Quiffy, has to quickly collect rubbish before he's drowned in the ensuing deluge.

In the latter, rooms are often flooded or flooding, but not in any dynamic fashion, while your character, a man in a diving suit, has to quickly collect small children before he's speared to death by a more feminine looking version of himself.

Both are excellent games, though I do find *Flood* the more terrifying of the two. Something about the interminable rising water, and the sound Quiffy makes when he's hurt. Uh, I shudder just thinking about it.



### Play it! You too can be a green sort of thing with a snorkel...

**1** Like everything on this page that isn't MAMEframe, *Flood* is an Atari ST game. If you've read this far, you probably already know that our preferred ST emulator is *STEm*.

**2** You'll need to find the Atari ST's OS, *TOS*. Don't google "st tos" or else you'll find *Star Trek: The Original Series*. Unless that's what you're after. Let's pretend it is for the next point.

**3** Visit your preferred torrent site to find *Star Trek: The Original Series*. We recommend *uTorrent* as a client and the open source-media player *VLC Media Player* for playback.

**4** If you're still looking for *Flood*, it's on Automation disk 313. We can't tell you where that is, but you know how to use Google don't you? You're not some sort of idiot fish, are you?

## MAMEframe

### CHEEKY MOUSE

**CHEEKY MOUSE WANTS** your cheese, and he'll eat through a thin layer of green just to get at it. Luckily, cheeky mouse can be killed by smashing him with a mallet. But, just as you think you've seen the end of cheeky mouse, another cheeky mouse appears to finish the job. There are dozens of cheeky mice – not just one.

This is just like the time we thought *BioShock 2* only had one *Big Sister* (if you didn't know this, turn to page 40 right now) except more devastating. Your cheese stocks are imperilled by waves of cheeky mice, and each mouse is undeniably cheekier than the last.

Level two brought 'mystery', a pink character who kills you on contact.

### WHAT IS MAME?

The *Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator* runs over 3,500 games. You can get it from [mamedev.org](http://mamedev.org) or from this issue's DVD (we've also got 32 and 64-bit versions of *MameUI*, which has a nice interface). But downloading games for it is illegal. So don't.

Overwhelmed by mystery, you fall, dead, through your own layer of green and into your stockpile of cheese. The mice stand still, silent and solemn. Your death makes them realise how cheeky they'd been and they're filled with shame. Shame on you, cheeky mice.



## Time Charts

### DOOM STRIKES BACK

**THE YEAR IS 1995**, it's undeniably January, and sitting in second place on the charts is none other than *Doom II: Hell on Earth*, sequel to *Doom* and all-round scary shooting game.

What can be said about *Doom II* that hasn't already been said? The game flings you back to Earth after you've successfully swatted the hellish invasion force on Deimos and Phobos, only to plunge you into another conflict. Demons have swarmed forth from their hellholes and captured Earth, so you and your guns must kill them all to bits.

*Doom*'s rubbish when you go back to it now, and anybody who claims to enjoy it is probably a liar and a thief. *Wolfenstein 3D* too, that's an atrocious game. Time is a dripping tap and your favourite games are a layer of rapidly dissolving limestone. It's a wonder why we bother having a retro section at all, when you consider how mired in shit everything is. Roll on, future.

### PC ZONE Top 20 January 1995

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1</b> <i>SIMCITY 2000</i> MAXIS                   | <b>11</b> <i>MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR V.5</i> MICROSOFT |
| <b>2</b> <i>DOOM 2</i> VIRGIN                        | <b>12</b> <i>LEMMINGS 2</i> PSYGNOSIS                     |
| <b>3</b> <i>TIE FIGHTER</i> LUCASARTS                | <b>13</b> <i>DAEMONSGATE</i> GAMETEK                      |
| <b>4</b> <i>COLONIZATION</i> MICROPROSE              | <b>14</b> <i>SYSTEM SHOCK</i> EA                          |
| <b>5</b> <i>FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER</i> EA         | <b>15</b> <i>INDY CAR RACING</i> VIRGIN                   |
| <b>6</b> <i>THEME PARK</i> EA                        | <b>16</b> <i>CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 93</i> DOMARK           |
| <b>7</b> <i>X-WING</i> US GOLD                       | <b>17</b> <i>PREMIER MANAGER 2</i> GREMLIN GRAPHICS       |
| <b>8</b> <i>TRANSPORT TYCOON</i> MICROPROSE          | <b>18</b> <i>CARD SHOP PLUS</i> MINDSCAPE                 |
| <b>9</b> <i>TFX</i> OCEAN                            | <b>19</b> <i>AWARD WINNERS</i> EMPIRE                     |
| <b>10</b> <i>MICROSOFT SPACE SIMULATOR</i> MICROSOFT | <b>20</b> <i>KRUSTY'S SUPER FUN HOUSE</i> VIRGIN          |



It doesn't say "Tesco", but it's heavily implied.



## Back In The Day

# HUNTER

*Hunter* was one of the first open-world adventure games. *Steve Hogarty* unravels its free-roaming retro-complexities...

DEVELOPER Paul Holmes PUBLISHER Activision RELEASED 1991

### DAY 1 - ????

Private Steve reporting for duty, everyone. Yes, yes I'm new here, but – oh good, my first mission is about to begin already. I'm to return to HQ within six days carrying "1 general's head". Cripes. That's the enemy general, I assume. Whoever the enemy are. Actually, what army is this? I don't remember ever enlisting into some kind of barbaric conglomerate of head-hunting arseholes.

Anyway, I've left my watch at home so I've no idea what time it is. The sun is out, and the tide is in. A seagull circles overhead before flying into the side of the HQ building, so I'm guessing it's around midday. Hmm. I should probably get on with it.

### DAY 1 - 1055

Strolling into HQ, I'm told off for not having any generals' heads. I find a clock though, along with a log book and a map, some flares, money, and aerial observation units. And get this, the log book contains my first clue! It's given me the location of the "1st man" and "ally stores" along the way. I hop into my rocket boat (I've got a rocket boat) and set a course. The general's days are numbered. And that number, hopefully, is six.

### DAY 1 - 1240

What at first appears to be a wizard in a bungalow turns out to be an enemy uniform next to some drapes. It's basically a red version of what I'm

Fuel doesn't last long in *Hunter*.



already wearing – the perfect disguise. Using this red jacket should, in theory, allow me to saw off the general's head while the enemy stands in a big semi-circle watching, worried, but fairly certain that I probably know what I'm doing.

### DAY 1 - 1532

I meet the "first man". He looks suitably suspicious in his brown trench coat and trilby, and he's intimidatingly tall. First man says nothing of the general or his head, but instead tells me to go to "the old man" at co-ordinates X-181, Y-197.

I have to write that down on a piece of paper. Like, physical paper. Next to the PC. How meta!

The indicated location turns out to be miles away across the sea, and as my rocket boat is almost out of fuel, I use my aerial observation thing to locate nearby vehicles.

### DAY 1 - 1932

I find a car. It not being a seagoing car, I use it to track down a helicopter. A seagoing helicopter. I will use that to go across the sea, as long as I can make it fly. For some reason the up/

**"Strolling into HQ, I'm told off for not having any generals' heads"**





down controls are tied directly to the cannon, so that lifting off requires that I spray whatever's in front of me with gunfire. Rabbits, trees, churches, the cannon cares not who it sprays with its lethal gunfire.

### DAY 1 - 2031

I crash the helicopter somewhere near the old man I'm looking for. Right next to him in fact, as he's living in a nearby lighthouse with nothing but a sofa for company. OK then, old man, where to next? I've got my pen ready. He doesn't respond. I press the talk button again, he mutters something about just being some old man. I try to give him my flares and several aerial observation units. He doesn't want them.

### DAY 1 - 2311

I've tried everything. I've offered everything in my inventory. I've taken off my uniform, I've circled the couch. Rubbish. I hate this game. I'm stuck. Even the internet can't help me. Stupid, hateful retro games. This game is supposed to have a 3D deer in it and I'll never get to see it, all because of this ridiculous old man.

### D-BUG DISK 9 MENU SCREEN

I quit, retreating to the ROM's menu screen, where I'm greeted by the familiar sight of bouncing text. Look! It's got a game called *Cybercon III* on here. They wouldn't have made three of them if they weren't absolutely brilliant.



**"This game is supposed to have a 3D deer in it and I'll never get to see it, all because of this old man"**

### CYBERCON III - ROOM 1

Wow. *Cybercon III* is a virtual reality wonderland. I can do anything! I'm the master of this digital microcosm. How do I open this door? Pressing letters causes symbols to appear in a bar at the top of the screen. Holding down control allows me to look up and down. Wait, hold on. Now the symbols are... objects? Wait! Letters are appearing by the door. Perhaps they - THE DOOR IS OPENING!

### CYBERCON III - ROOM 2

Darker, and featuring two huge pillars, Room 2 is a more foreboding place. There are fewer things to play with though. Room 3 is just as dark as

Room 2, which makes it even less pleasing. I march onwards regardless, noting with pleasure the different tones at which the doors hum when opening. One large door made a very loud humming noise, which was rather frightening. I've no idea what I'm doing.

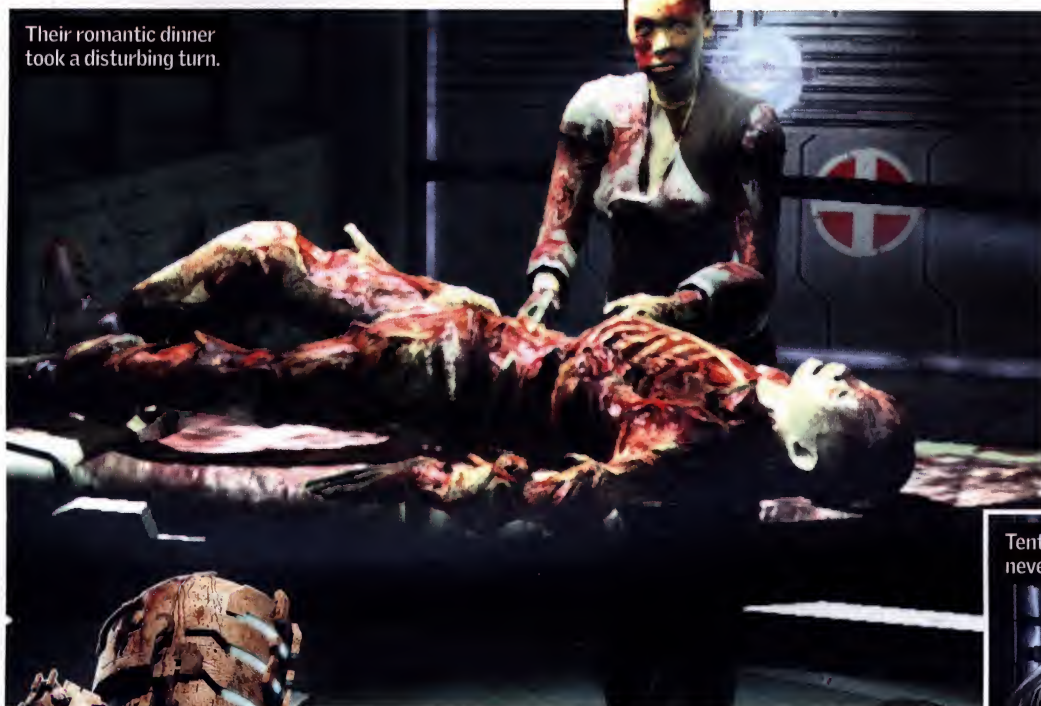
### CYBERCON III - ROOM 4

Room 4 has flying things in it, my first reaction to which is one of fear. I stand my ground - maybe they're friendly - and am shot at to bits for my trouble. So that's *Cybercon III*, a game about wandering through a maze, confused and waiting to die. Next month, I fail to play or understand two other games. Let's say... *Bombjack* and *Damocles*. **CT**



# On the PCZ Hard Drive

The games we're playing, and why we're playing them



Their romantic dinner took a disturbing turn.



Isaac getting head.



"On your feet mate."



Tentacles are never good.

## DEAD SPACE

Stomping babies: *Richard Cosgrove*

**V**ERY FEW MINUTES passed after I started playing *Dead Space* before I realised what I feeling wasn't terror. It was *deja vu*.

I knew that *Dead Space* derived much from great horror sci-fi movies and games – *Aliens*, *Event Horizon*, *System Shock 2*, and Carpenter's *The Thing* to name but four – but I wasn't prepared for just how much. That isn't a complaint (after all if you're going to rip something off, do it to a classic), as the game properly shat me up. But that was only until I learnt *Dead Space*'s survival rule: when lights go dim, monsters come. From behind.

I always get into trouble with the monsters. This wasn't down to Isaac's notoriously slow turning speed (entirely realistic, given he wears plate mail), but because I found them fascinating to watch. I stood still as they approached, thinking, "Wow. These mutants are really well designed. So gross. So foul. And I hope that's a mouth on that thing's stomach." And then I ended up having to hammer the E key when one makes a grab-and-bite attack.

But there was one point where I did feel horror, guilt and disgust. That was

in the room of babies. You know the one on the medical deck, where dead infants in various stages of decay float in glass cages? When monsters attacked here, I was certain Visceral – the team behind this game – couldn't have made it more clear that I was stomping on mutated, tentacled babies, even if a floating hologram had literally spelled it out to me using big letters and small words.

So thanks guys for making me kick mutated infants around like footballs. I really needed that issue to add to my list.

**VERDICT:** Child unfriendly

**"Thanks for making me kick mutated infants like footballs"**

A man in need of a holiday. And a tailor.



# SIMCITY 4

Urban planning: **Keith Pullin**

**BACK IN 1987** I was working on my GCSE Computer Studies project. I programmed a little utility on the BBC Micro called, rather inspirationally, *Housing Estate Planner*.

Written in BASIC, you could move around the screen with the cursor keys and place a section of road with the 'R' key or a house by pressing 'H'. It was a terrible, unwieldy thing – but incredibly I got an A for it.

Mr Wright, my teacher, obviously saw something there. Now, whilst he wasn't *the* Mr Wright, I have my suspicions they were related. The fact that my teacher lived in Portsmouth, England and Will Wright lived in America isn't relevant. As techy types they probably had futuristic means of communication using a powerful computer and a phone line. I know because I saw it on *WarGames*.

Anyway, during one particularly drunken multiplayer session when the two of them were bemoaning the state

of online 8-bit gaming, Mr Wright the teacher must have let slip the genius of my GCSE project to Will. And an 8x8 seed was sown. Before you know it Will Wright is a multi-millionaire game designer whereas I. Am. Not.

I'm not bitter. I only think about it once or twice a day and sometimes I don't even think about it at all. In fact, I like to play *SimCity 4* as much as possible so I can make a list of all the things he got wrong (as I have with all the previous versions).

I've been doing this for 20 years and have reached the point where I'm ready to email my list to him – with a gallery of screenshots. I have a feeling he'll really appreciate my creative input and knowledge of *BASIC*. A partnership that should have happened 20 years ago will finally be formed.

This is why I'm currently playing *SimCity 4* and why I will keep playing until he releases *SimCity 5* in 2011.

**VERDICT:** Money owed!



# RISEN

Skipping dialogue: **David Brown**

**WHILE I WAS** brutally laid low by a prolapsed disc in my back, and the prospect of spending the foreseeable future sat on my arse, an epic decision was made. My quest would be to enter the world of *Risen*, a game that would surely have enough gameplay hours within its Teutonic shell to stave off the effects of my cabin fever.

What I got out of my 40 hours or so of gnome-bothering was a thought: what could a dedicated German

development house achieve if they actually bothered to smooth the rough-as-anything edges of their games?

*Risen* is an archetypal Germanic RPG game in that there are a ridiculous number of things to see and do. It's like you're in a restaurant and you order a salad. It gets delivered to your table and it's full of delicious food chunklets, looking so appetising there on the plate. Then you discover that the vinaigrette isn't vinaigrette – it's the chef's urine.

That's what playing *Risen* is like. It's engrossing and detailed, yet the dialogue and voiceovers are so bad you just skip through it all. The combat has potential, but it's frustrating until you realise the best tactic is to summon Fred, your skeleton warrior ally, who takes the beating while you chop up the enemies from behind. Before you realise this, you'll spend ages holding down block and waiting for a chance to strike. When you do hit, you do virtually no damage anyway (at first).

The difficulty isn't the issue, as it's about time we got an RPG that didn't mollycoddle us (*Oblivion*). It's just Piranha Bytes should have spent more money on getting talented voice actors, and a bit more time on making more varied character models, instead of giving us the ever-so-useful ability to climb into a bathtub for absolutely no reason whatsoever. Fully clothed.

**VERDICT:** Rough diamond

What happens when wolves and dachshunds mate.



## WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

Readers on their chosen poison

### BORDERLANDS

I am lost. Please follow the green diamond to find me. I may not leave without a fight. Bigger me this game is pretty friggin great.

**Mad\_AI**

### MIRROR'S EDGE

Pretty solid game and certainly one of the most beautiful I've ever played. Would definitely recommend it, especially for poncey designer types like me.

**King\_clueless**

### ARMA II

Bought it for £12.50 off *Steam*. So far it's kinda meh. I keep getting told to engage the enemy half a kilometer away and get a bollocking for leaving formation. It's realistic though so if you wanted to join the army but couldn't due to bad eyesight/flat feet/abject cowardice, this is the game for you.

**byrne453**

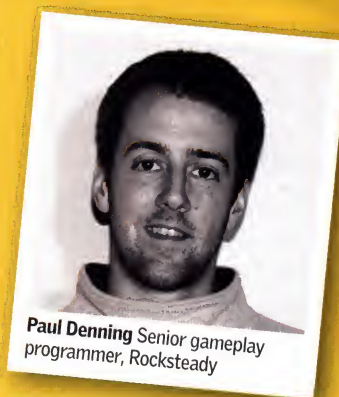


# BATMAN ARKHAM ASYLUM

Keith Pullin gets the low-down on the bat and the clown

**W**ITH THEIR FIRST venture into the world of superheroes, Rocksteady Games have created something developers have been attempting for over 30 years: a superhero game that's actually worth playing. In fact, more than that, it's the best darned superhero game this planet has ever seen.

Still in shock at the sheer magnitude of it all, we caught up with senior gameplay programmer Paul Denning to find out how they managed to pull it off...



Paul Denning Senior gameplay programmer, Rocksteady



"Don't worry, won't kill you."



"Open wide and say aah."

## 01 CUTTING CUTSCENES

"It was smoke and mirrors in a lot of places, but we were very keen to keep the player immersed as much as possible. In *Resident Evil 5* there are moments where you're playing and you find yourself in a completely different place and you think: 'Well, hold on. I wasn't really here – you've just cheated to get me here,' and we really didn't want that.

"One of the cool things we did was in the second Scarecrow encounter. At the very end when you become young Bruce Wayne, it looks like it's all scripted and sequence based, he's crouched down over his parents and nothing happens. Then you realise that if you push a button you're still in control – and you then walk off. That was a really powerful scene and we really enjoyed putting that together.

"There are limitations in what you can achieve in the time you have available, we have a very dedicated team and they worked very, very hard to pull off all the cinematics.

"If we'd had more cutscenes they probably wouldn't have been as high quality as they are now. We would have been sacrificing quality for quantity which is something we never want to do."



"Quick boy! Steal his wallet!"

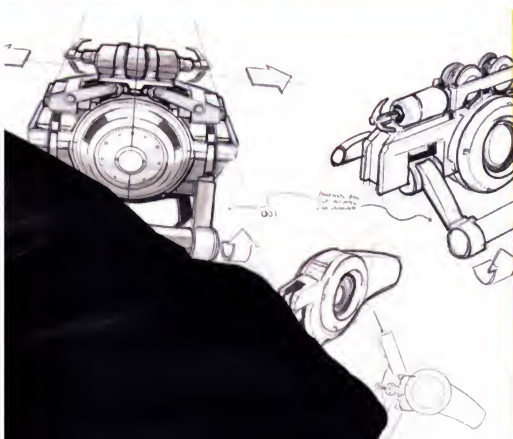
"The villains we used can better Batman in their core disciplines"



## 02 CHOOSING THE VILLAINS

"Once we got the initial design underway we were looking at characters that could test Batman. A lot of the villains we used can better Batman in their core disciplines. Bane beats Batman in terms of brute strength, and The Riddler is smarter than Batman. But they are all very flawed as well. So, if you can't take them on in their strongest area you can certainly take them on in another way – so that's where the gameplay ideas originated from.

"There are just so many characters that there's no way we'd be able to get all of them in properly. You'd end up with miniscule appearances that were just throwaway. People would say 'Oh, you didn't do my favourite character justice.' So we went for the biographies and the collectibles instead to give the fans what they wanted without doing them a disservice. A lot of these characters are just as good as the ones we've used. Some of them aren't as well known, but when we look on the forums we find people talking about characters you never expect there to be a big following for."



## 03 ONES THAT GOT AWAY

"Our iteration of Bane is maybe not what you expected from the comics. In the comics he's very, very intelligent. We obviously didn't go down that route. If you did, you'd need a lot more screen time to convey that. As for the other villains we'd like to have explored, my favourite is Mr Freeze. There's a great duality there. He's a bad guy, but he's driven by a very pure idea that he loves his wife, who is in

cryogenic storage and he'll do anything he can to find the technology to revive her. So, he's not necessarily pure evil, he does bad things to get his wife back which is an interesting concept to explore and build upon.

"There are characters that I find fascinating and the other members of the team would pick their own as well. There are so many characters in the universe. You could go on forever almost."

A brutal, violent psychopath. And he's the good guy!



## 04 THE GOOD GUY

"We knew Batman couldn't kill anyone. DC and Warner Bros drummed it into us that this could never happen. We tried to push the boundaries and they kept pushing back, so enemies falling unconscious pretty much happened from the off.

"What was cool was as we got further through the project, DC and WB kept coming back saying things like 'these guys look like they're dead. You can't do that,' so we added the ability for their chest to rise and fall, which looks like they're breathing and enhanced the impression that were

unconscious. Also, as the detective modes and forensic aspects evolved we

put in the 'unconscious' tags to reinforce the idea. So, it was always our plan to make them unconscious but we evolved the idea to make it more apparent.

"We also had to be really careful with our level design. There are a lot of places where you could do some serious damage to people by throwing them over huge gaps and stuff. Warner and DC weren't too happy about that, so, and this is a testament to the strength of our level designers, we had some carefully laid out areas ensuring that wasn't possible. We really like that stuff, but we had no misconceptions that we would ever get away with broken bodies or missing limbs."



In the Aussie version, Harley Quinn wears a chastity belt.



What? Don't yo

Swish...



Over head throwing action

## 05 WHICH BAT?

"The comics that mainly influenced us were *Arkham Asylum*, *Venom*, *Living Hell*, *The Detective Files of Batman*, and *Hush*. We took some of the forensic ideas from *Hush*. There are some good pages in the early parts with some nice onscreen display type stuff for Batman's visor.

"No Batman game had ever done the forensics stuff before and it was something Warner Bros were

really keen on and something we felt we could really go to town on, so the *Detective Files of Batman* helped a lot in that respect.

"But *Arkham Asylum* is probably the big one. There's something special about that book. Not all the fans actually like it but that was definitely our starting point and a big influence in the early days. I mean, the '60s series is fine. That's where Batman

was back then, but not now. As a character and a universe Batman has changed very much. The movies have changed it and the comic books too have gone much, much darker in more recent times.

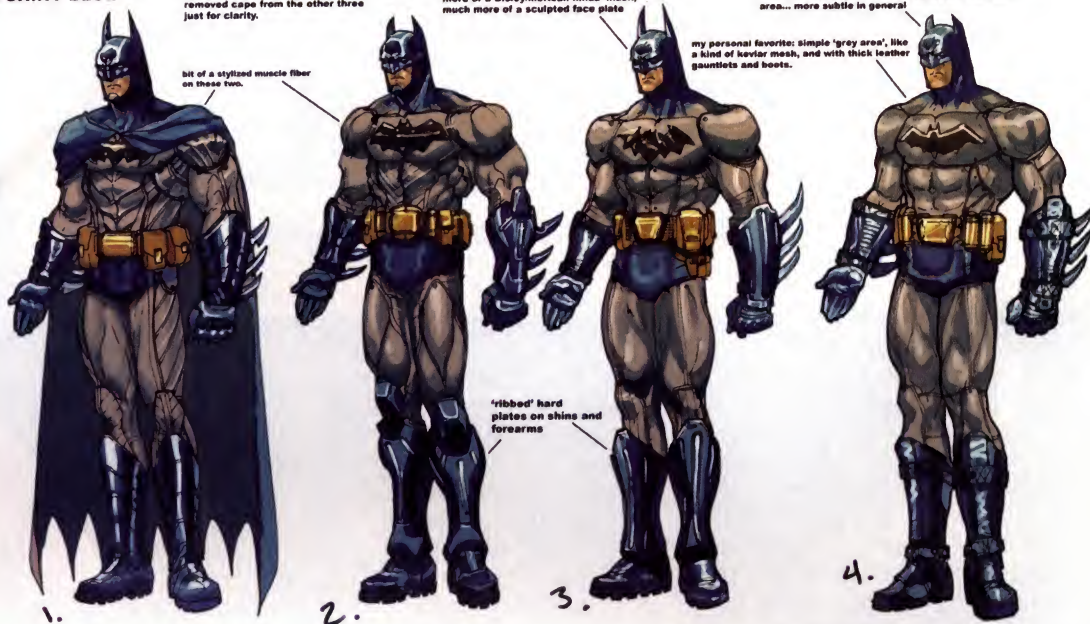
"Although, we did suggest having a camp cheat mode with a few 'Kapowwww!', 'Powwww!', 'Booppppppp!' and 'Krrraackkk!' effects thrown in, but it was shot down."





"Well, yeah, I do actually."

● DULL GREY  
● SHINY BLUE



Buff, buffer, Buffy and Cloak boy.

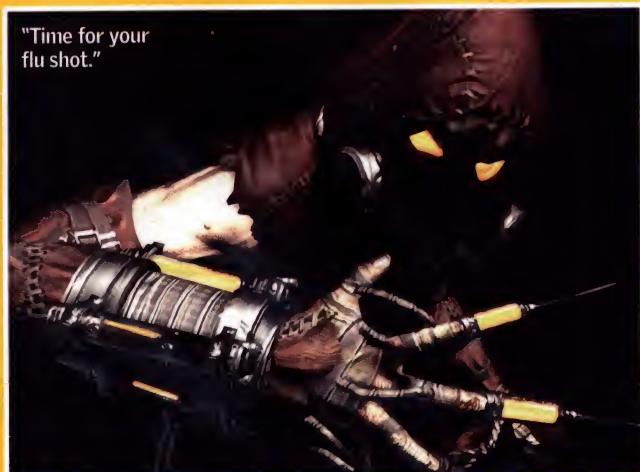
## 06 HALLUCINATORY CRASHES

"By the time you reached the Scarecrow for the third time we were after something a little bit different. I think the idea to fake a PC crash originated from our game director, Sefton Hill, and basically evolved from there.

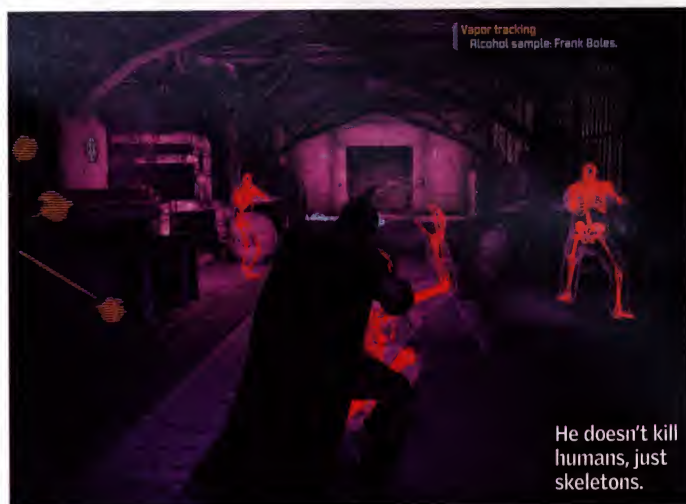
"The funny thing was we focused tested it and people didn't get it. They didn't understand what had happened and this was when we had the cutscenes in. Even when they saw the cutscene with The Joker driving the Batmobile they just said: 'Oh - that looked like something went wrong there!'

"So, we were really worried at one point that it wasn't going to come off. The other thing was we weren't sure whether Microsoft and Sony would allow it because obviously it made it look like your machine had crashed. Honestly though, we have to bow our heads a little bit to *Eternal Darkness*, they paved the way by doing that a number of years before.

"We did think about some other stuff, but in the end we went for the crash. It is a stand out moment. If you ask people what the key moments were - most of them will mention that. The trouble is that it's a bit of a one shot mechanism. Once you've done it once, people expect it. You've really got to nail it the first time or we've effectively lost. It had to be once and it had to be good."



"Time for your flu shot."



## 07 A TICKET TO GOTHAM

"Gotham itself is a fantastically realised fictional city and there are so many places that would probably be ideal for our gameplay and great to explore. But would our game have worked in a free-roaming Gotham City? I really don't think it would have.

"I think sandbox games that do that well are so hard to realise. *Grand Theft Auto* is obviously a fantastic example of one that gets it right but there are so many that get it wrong and I think you have to be careful when you take that route.

"Before we announced *Arkham Asylum* and how confined it was, there were people on the

forums hoping it was set in Gotham. I read that thinking 'Is that really what you want?' because as soon as you open it up and allow that diversity you lose specifics and the ability to get core mechanics really nailed down.

"I think if *Arkham Asylum* had been that kind of game I'm pretty sure it wouldn't have been as good. Also, Batman is a very driven character and wants to stop The Joker at all costs - you'd lose

that intensity if you could suddenly think to yourself, 'Oh, I'll just go over here for a bit.' I think it would be very difficult and you'd have to approach it very carefully."

Find part  
two of our *Arkham Asylum* Developer's  
Commentary in *PC ZONE* issue 216  
out 23 December!



STEVE HILL'S

# NEVERQUEST

"Aion can fly higher than an eagle," warbles *Steve Hill*



**I** BELIEVE I can fly, I believe I can touch the sky. But not until I've spent three days running errands in a fantasy world. Word is that level 10 is when you reach 'Ascension' in *Aion*, and sprout wings. So, character selection is paramount, and I'm already faced with a difficult choice: whether to side with the Elyos or the Asmodians.

Initially it seems a shoe-in: the Elyos "dwell in light and warmth" and "are blessed with elegance and beauty," whereas the Asmodians are "fierce and bestial, with manes and pointed claws." However, from their point of view the Asmodians are "strong and adaptable" as opposed to the "weak and puny clawless little lordlings" of the Elyos. I haven't even started and I'm already being subjected to a spin campaign. It's more than my indecisive mind can cope with, and I'm so confused that I switch off the PC and go and do something less interesting instead.

Finally returning, I opt for the Elyos on the basis that they seem basically good, and there's a bit of tit on show in their picture. As for a specific character, I don't normally do the transgender MMO thing, but if I'm going to be looking at someone's back for a week, it might as well be a pert young woman as a hairy-arsed bloke. Selecting a female warrior by the name of NeverQuest, I don't spend too long tweaking the myriad options, but do leave the 'Chest' slider on the default setting of maximum.

## ANIMAL FARM

Beginning my epic adventure in Atreia, I'm in a field, it's raining, and I'm using an oversized leaf as an ersatz umbrella. A nearby farmer appears to be swatting invisible demons. Striking up a chat, he unsurprisingly wants me to slaughter some of the local wildlife in return for nominal remuneration. Wielding my puny

sword, I hack away at some Longnosed Snufflers followed by Striped Kerub, which feels a bit like killing a child. I soon become accustomed to the bloodletting, decimating the animal and human populace in an endless rampage that haunts me in my sleep.

There is some variety in my chores, and at one point I find myself playing a flute to wake a sleeping tree. I also deliver "a book exploring the folktale about a nymph and a woodcutter" to a lonely woodcutter called Namus, along with a bowl of soup; essentially the Atreian equivalent of a Pot Noodle and a wank. I begin to think that my good nature is being abused, and reach a low point at 6am Earth time when I find myself delivering wine to a stoat.

Throughout this extensive period, social interaction is at a premium. I attempt to strike up conversation with a girl called Marlen, whose only contribution is "i little speak eng."

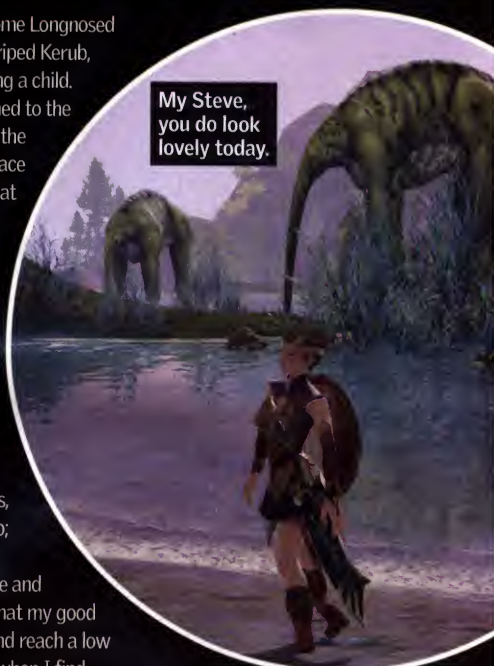
Exhausted and exasperated, I strip off my chafing armour and immerse myself up to my tits in a refreshing Nymph's Pool.

## FLABBY WINGS

These wings aren't going to grow themselves, so I press on, fighting hallucinogenic mushrooms, avenging a barbecued pig, and killing a lot of miners. Occasionally I'm treated to a flashback of what seems to be a living version of a heavy metal album cover, where I sprout wings and wrestle with demons. Back in the present, I take advantage of Atreia's efficient transport system, being ferried around by a giant bird.

I really want my own wings though, and finally my time comes. Summoned to Sanctum, which looks like a floating Vegas hotel, I undergo the ceremony, whereby I'm curtly informed that this is a no-fly zone, my debut flight restricted to a clumsy glide down a set of stairs.

My Steve, you do look lovely today.



What a fine sight.



Mushrooms. Are they what made Steve so positive?



A few seconds later, mace met windmill.



Catching a sky boat, the only other passenger is a buxom sort called Serrina, a member of something called Gods Army. Breaking the awkward silence, I inquire as to whether she's religious. When the answer comes back "no" I promptly ask if I can join. Expecting the traditional brush-off, surprisingly she sends her message to her leader, Deathangel, who invites me into their legion.

Finally, I'm a valid member of society, and make an instant contribution by teaching Serrina to fly. Repairing to nearby Verteron, we take to the sky, soaring above the swamp like Sapphic angels. Working as a team, we discover a rare cliff-side fossil, murder a lot of crabs, and set about some masked terrorists. Days pass. I'm not sure who I am any more, but I do have a branded cape and a sword that will take a dinosaur's leg off. I even learn to cook, rustling up some Roasted Inina that is described as "sublime."

There's a long way to go, but I've got a 60-day pass and I'm going to use it. I think I could be happy here... **PCZ**



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213: Rory Seaton, Co. Down

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*Winning an ASUS 900GT Top graphics card.*

214: Daniel Polworth, Essex

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*Winning a mystery prize!*

214: Mark, Cullompton

### Lego Bionicles

*Winning six Bionicles figures, four action vehicles and a DVD*

212: Janine Papworth, Sidmouth

### Order of War (online)

*Winning a copy of the game, a GeForce GTX 260 NVIDIA graphics card, a WWII soldier slang book, an Order of War soundtrack, and a mousemat.*

Lara Howe, Brentwood

*Runners-up receiving an Order of War soundtrack and a mousemat*

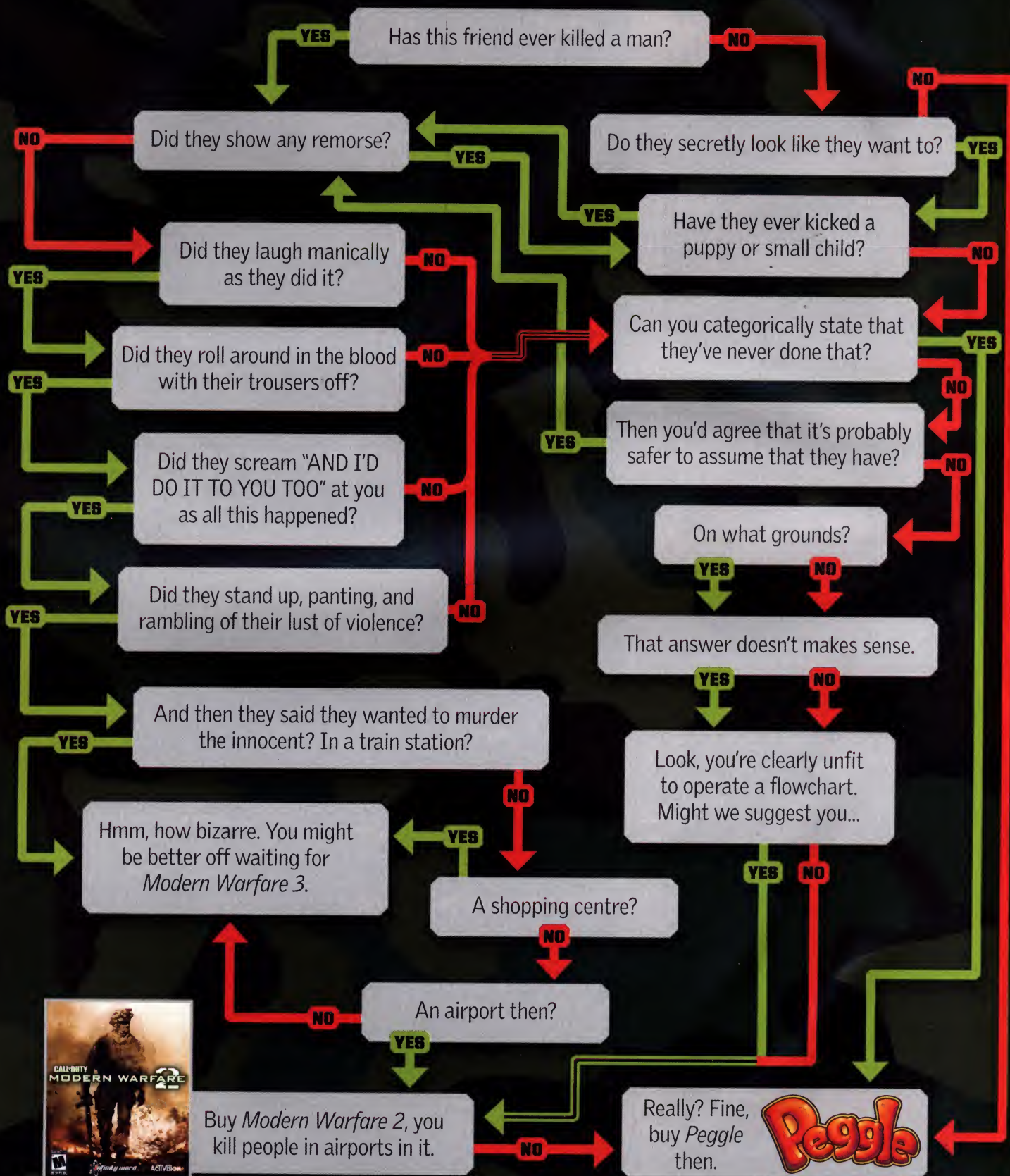
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